A STUDY OF JOHN'S INGROUP AND OUTGROUP IN REV 2-3 FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY.

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by

Jonggoo Lee

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This Dissertation, written by

Jonggoo Lee

under the direction of his faculty committee and approved by its members,
has been presented to and accepted by
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty Committee

Dr. Gregory J. Riley, Chairperson

Dr. Dennis R. MacDonald

Dr. Margaret Froelich

Dean of the Faculty

Dr. Andrew Dreitcer

May 2022

Abstract

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from the Perspective of Social Identity Theory

Jonggoo Lee

Claremont School of Theology 2022

Scholars have long argued that the Book of Revelation, written as anti-Roman literature, shows enmity toward the Roman Empire and empire-wide persecutions of followers of Jesus. Indeed, the apocalyptic part (Rev 4-22) reflects much hatred for the empire and suffering from political power (11-18). This perspective, however, could not fully explain why John in Rev 2-3 expresses the most hatred to his opponents rather than to Roman political persecutions. It also could not offer a satisfactory answer to the relevance between the letter part (2-3) and the apocalyptic part (4-22). In Rev 2-3, John launches a severe attack on his opponents by stigmatizing them with the extremely negative term “Satan” (2:9, 2:13,2:13, 2:24, and 3:9) and the names of the most evil biblical figures “Balaam” and “Jezebel.” This dissertation argues that since John’s most critical concern is not so much political as theological, he attacks his opponents with loathsome stigmas in the letter part and presents correct theologies for his community in the apocalyptic part.

I apply social identity theory, one of the methods of social psychology, to analyze the group dynamics between John and his opponents, between ingroup and outgroup in John's congregations in Rev 2-3. During his exile in Patmos, some churches were afflicted by Jewish accusations and some were infused with the accommodating teaching of a Hellenistic Gnostic group. Consequently, they were losing their positive religious identity and compromising with

pagan cultic culture. In other words, John's ingroup underwent an "identity crisis" due to false teachings "permeating the boundaries of social groups." In such a circumstance, John felt keenly the necessity of the clear boundaries between his ingroup and the outgroups to which the opponents belonged. On the other hand, to attack the outgroups powerfully, he categorizes them with the most negative term Satan and the evil biblical characters Balaam and "Jezebel" ("negative outgroup prototypes"). This was the way to maximize the efficiency to rebuild the social identity of John's ingroup and to prevent them from defecting away from the ingroup and participating in imperial cults (2:14, 2:20). Since John urges his community to recategorize themselves by choosing which group they would belong to, his letters help them to promote the process of "social categorization."

In this sense, John tries to make his ingroup pursue a positive social identity by offering well-balanced theological themes in the apocalyptic part, where his ingroup can compare his teachings to false teachings and discern which group is God's true community. He helps his churches learn what they believe (the doctrine of God and Christology in Rev 4-5) and who they are (Ecclesiology in Rev 6-22). His apocalyptic visions are designed to encourage his ingroup to assimilate the ingroup's prototypes and norms and to lead his community to a strong social identity and theological unity. For this reason, the apocalyptic part boosts the process of "social identification." This dissertation will argue that against his outgroups, by employing the most malicious stigmas in the letter part, John makes a clear distinction between ingroup and outgroup and presents correct theologies for his ingroup's positive identity in the apocalyptic part.

For my wife Seungah Han,

who has always supported me with love, patience, and encouragement.

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Abbreviations

ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*
Adv. haer.	Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*
AHR	*American Historical Review*
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BDAG	Frederick W. Danker ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.* 3rd *ed.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
CBR	*Currents in Biblical Research*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
Comm.	Origen, *Commentary on John*
HTS	*Harvard Theological Studies*
Hist. eccl.	Eusebius, *Church History*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
NRSV	*New Revised Standard Version*
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
Quis div.	Clement of Alexandria, *Quis Dives Salvetur*
SBL	*Society of Biblical Literature*
TDNT	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
WBC	*World Biblical Commentary*

Introduction

Raising an Issue

The second-century church father Irenaeus dated the book of Revelation to the final years of Domitian's reign, 95-98 CE (*Adv. haer.* 5.30.3). About 150 years later, the Christian historian Eusebius depicted Domitian as a tyrant so brutal in his persecution against Jesus followers that he was the "true successor to Nero" (*Hist. eccl.* 3.17-20).[1] Since then, most Christian writers have taken it for granted that Revelation was written during cruel Domitian's persecution.[2] Indeed, the apocalyptic part (Rev 4-22) of the book represents imposed imperial cults (Rev 13, 14:9-12), persecutions done by the Roman Empire (6:9-11, 7:14, 11:7-10, 17:6, 18:24, 20:4), and believers' hostility toward it (6:10, 16:6, 11:18, 19:2). However, the traditional view that persecution against Jesus's followers in Asia Minor executed by the Roman Empire is the backdrop for the book of Revelation has been usually doubted in current scholarship. The reason is that there is no convincing evidence to support imperial systematic persecutions at the time of the composition of Revelation.[3] Furthermore, the letter part (Rev 2-3) does not indicate any full-scale persecution, unlike the apocalyptic part. This visible discrepancy makes the interpretation of Revelation more complicated.

It has been a critical issue among scholars how to understand the discrepancy between

[1] Buist M. Fanning, *Revelation,* Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 20 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 28-29.
[2] Paul B. Duff, *Who Rides the Beast? Prophetic Rivalry and the Rhetoric of Crisis in the Churches of the Apocalypse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 4.
[3] Alan S. Bandy, "Persecution and the Purpose of Revelation with Reference to Roman Jurisprudence," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 23, no. 3 (2013): 377.

Revelation and historical evidence, and the relevance between the letter part (Rev 2-3) and the apocalyptic part (Rev 4-22). Paul B. Duff categorized five options according to how to address this issue.[4]

The first option supposes an earlier date for the Book of Revelation. In the 1960s, John A. T. Robinson tried to minimize the difference between historical evidence and the persecution described in Revelation by arguing that this book was written just after Nero's vicious attack on Jesus's followers in Rome (68-70 CE).[5] The opinion of this earlier date was proposed by several well-known scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,[6] but Robinson elaborates it by finding evidence from church traditions and from Revelation itself. He presents one tradition preserved in Tertullian showing that John was banished during Nero's time.[7] Furthermore, he quotes some Syriac sources indicating that Revelation was composed before Domitian's time. One of his contributions is the reading of the seven heads of the beast in 17:9-11 which has been a critical problem for those who prefer Domitian's date. He regards this reading as demonstrating Nero's setting and date. Accordingly, Robinson insists that John makes use of the trauma that Jesus's followers would have experienced in Nero's persecution in Rome. However, this earlier date has failed to persuade many scholars since Nero's persecution was not a empire-wide systematic one that could be found in Asia Minor but was limited to the City of Rome.[8]

David Aune also tries to solve this dating problem by suggesting that Revelation was written in two separate editions. Before the first edition, many independent apocalyptic story-

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[4] Duff, *Who Rides the Beast?*, 1-10.

[5] John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1975), 252.

[6] For example, J. B. Lightfoot, B. F. Westcott, and F. J. A. Hort are scholars of the nineteenth century; A. Momigliano and B. W. Henderson are scholars of the twentieth century. Duff, *Who Rides the Beast?*, 6.

[7] Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, 224.

[8] Fanning, *Revelation,* 29.

units were formed from 50 to 60 CE.[9] The first edition consisting of the most apocalyptic part (1:7-12a and 4:1-22:5) was composed by the author who had experienced trauma during the Roman-Jewish war (66-73 CE). At the same time, the first edition was "Christianized" according to Christology.[10] The second edition including the letter part (1:1-6; 1:12b-3:22; 22:6-21) was complete around the last decade of the first century.[11] The obvious differences between the letter part and the apocalyptic part in style and theology cause Aune to propose the theory of two editions.[12]

The second option is to suppose that the seven churches "perceived great hostility" against themselves. In her book *Crisis & Catharsis* published in 1984, Adela Yarbro Collins tried to keep the traditional Domitian date for Revelation but agreed with John A. T. Robinson's argument that there was no concrete historical evidence of full-scale persecutions reflected in the apocalyptic part.[13] She contends that John does not depict past historical persecutions which the seven churches have experienced. Instead, he envisages future persecutions which will be done by the Roman authority. Consequently, the crisis which caused John to write Revelation was not

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[9] David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, WBC 52A (Dallas: Word Books, 1997), cxxii.

[10] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, cxxiii-cxxxiv. David Aune insists that the idea that "Revelation is the product of the simply redacted combination of two or more extensive apocalypses is ultimately problematic." Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, cxviii.

[11] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, cxxxii-cxxxiv.

[12] Like Aune, many scholars support this theory of two editions even though their opinions are different. Jörg Frey insists that Revelation belongs to the Johannine tradition, consisting of two editions (1:1-3:22 and 22:1-21 for the letter part in the second edition). Dennis R. MacDonald agrees with Frey's opinion that Revelation stands in the Johannine tradition, but he has a slightly different viewpoint on the range of the two editions (1:1-9a and 22:8-21 for the second edition, including all references to John as the seer). Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Dionysian Gospel: The Fourth Gospel and Euripides* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 14-16. MacDonald, in his book *The Dionysian Gospel*, deals with a comprehensive history of the formation of Johannine literature. He suggests eight compositional stages: (1) 2 John, (2) 3 John, (3) 1 John, (4) the first edition of the Apocalypse by a now anonymous Johannine seer, (5) the first edition of the Gospel, (6) the second edition of the Gospel, (7) the final edition of the Gospel, and (8) the creation of a Johannine corpus, including the final redaction of the Apocalypse. Macdonald, *The Dionysian Gospel*, xv.

[13] Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis & Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 54-56.

an objectively observable crisis but a perceived one.[14] The author's perceived extensive crisis could result from (1) the ostracism of the churches by Gentiles and Jews, (2) poverty, and (3) the lingering trauma from Nero's persecution and the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem.[15] John helps his churches mitigate their fearful anxiety and feel "catharsis" by projecting the perceived threat from Rome onto a cosmic screen.[16] In other words, Collins states that Revelation does not express the real relationship between the Roman Empire and the churches. Rather, it is designed to relive the churches' cumulative trauma in this exaggerated and imaginary way.

Collins contributed to the New Testament study by finding a way to interpret Revelation without any conflict between the narrative word of Revelation and historical evidence through methods of recent psychological, sociological, and anthropological studies. Her interpretation, however, ended up imprisoning Revelation in a psychological realm by assisting that "the crisis merely needs to be perceived to justify the feelings of a crisis."[17]

The third option supports the traditional view, asserting that the persecutions described in the apocalyptic part did happen during Domitian's time although there is no evidence to prove them. In opposition to Collins' psychological interpretation, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza , in her book *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* published in 1985, maintains that the experience of persecution depicted in Revelation should be taken seriously despite the lack of evidence at the time. The reason is that other New Testament writings as well as Revelation clearly show the experience of persecution.[18] She employs a useful analogy between the seven

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[14] Collins, *Crisis & Catharsis*, 84.
[15] Collins, *Crisis & Catharsis*, 84-107.
[16] Collins, *Crisis & Catharsis*, 153.
[17] Alan S. Bandy, "Persecution and the Purpose of Revelation with Reference to Roman Jurisprudence," *Bulletin for Biblical Research 23*, no. 3 (2013): 378.
[18] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg

churches living in Asia minor and African Americans living in the twentieth century.

> One could argue from the perspective of well-to-do white Americans that no harassment, denigration, discrimination, or oppression of blacks existed at the time of Martin Luther King, Jr., although King was assassinated. The perspective and experience of blacks would be quite different! Similarly, the author of Revelation has adopted the "perspective from below" and expressed the experiences of those who were powerless, poor, and in constant fear of denunciation.[19]

For this reason, Fiorenza asks us to respect the description of persecution in Revelation.

However, since the publication of The Book of Revelation in 1985, her stance on the perspective of persecution has changed. In her brief commentary on Revelation and her more recent publication, she began to use the word "conflict" between Christians and Roman political authorities rather than "full-fledged persecution." Her change shows the trend of recent studies on Revelation which do not think of full-fledged persecution as a motivation for the composition of Revelation.[20]

The fourth option states that there was no crisis, not even a perceived one. In his book *The book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* in 1990, Leonard Thompson rejected the crisis theory, arguing that the seven churches were in no crisis but lived quiet lives without any conflict, tension, or crisis.[21] According to him, the cruelty of Domitian presented in Roman standard sources was produced as rhetoric just after Domitian's death in Trajan's time to highlight the good nature of Emperor Trajan. [22] The writers of the standard sources often used the

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Fortress, 1998), 8.
[19] Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation*, 9.
[20] Duff, *Who Rides the Beast?*, 5-6.
[21] Leonard L. Thompson, *The book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 95, 172.
[22] Thompson, *The book of Revelation*, 97-99.

terms such as cruelty, barbarity, fury, and savageness to depict Domitian.[23] In contrast to their negative voice for Domitian, the writers contemporary with Domitian acclaimed their emperor's abilities and effectiveness in administering provincial affairs. He also did not intensify the imperial cult more than his previous emperors or successors.[24] During his rule, the province of Asia prospered and all the people including Jews and Christians lived in harmony sharing their urban environment, culture, and prosperity of the province.

> In brief, from this social backdrop one cannot assume widespread oppression and persecution of Asian Christians; nor can we assume that Asian Christians lived in an isolated ghetto as separatists from urban, Greco-Roman life. Christians were on occasion brought to trial, as Pliny indicates, but such accusations did not occur very often in Asia at the end of the first century. It is conceivable that the Book of Revelation was written in response to an otherwise unknown crisis in Asian Christianity, in which Christians were being - or about to be - persecuted in large numbers, but such a crisis does not fit other sources for this period. Sources other than the Book of Revelation portray Christians, for the most part, as sharing peacefully in urban Asian life alongside their non-Christian neighbors.[25]

For this reason, Thompson attributes the conflict and tension in Revelation between the seven churches and Roman authorities to John's perspective rather than hostilities from Roman society. Such a tension or crisis also derives from its genre "apocalypse" which features formal elements such as crisis, comfort, hope, and exhortation. Such elements, therefore, could not show real conflicts but an "apocalyptic point of view toward society."[26]

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[23] The standard sources for Domitian are as follows: Tacitus' *Agricola* (98 CE), *Germania* (98-99), and *Histories* (100-110); Pliny the Younger's *Panegyric* (100) and *Letters* (105-9); Dio Chrysostom's *Discourse*; Juvenal's *Satires* (115-27); Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* (120); Dio Cassius' *Roman History* (215); Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists* and *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. Thompson, *The book of Revelation*, 97.
[24] Thompson, *The book of Revelation*, 104-107.
[25] Thompson, *The book of Revelation*, 172.
[26] Thompson, *The book of Revelation*, 174-175.

The fifth option is to assume that the crisis resulted from conflict within the church not in Roman society. In his work *The Streets of Heaven: The Ideology of Wealth in the Apocalypse of John* in 1998, Robert M. Royalty insisted that the crisis in Revelation is within the churches not outside. John the author wrote Revelation to reinforce his authority over other Christian teachers by increasing the sense of crisis within his churches.[27] Especially, Royalty focuses on the ideology of wealth in Revelation. John pays attention to those who are worried about their low social and economic status. Thus, John presents God and Jesus as "wealthy patrons" of his communities who can offer them the true wealth available to them in the New Jerusalem. Jesus knows that the church in Smyrna suffers from poverty, but they are rich in the eye of Jesus. On the contrary, the church in Laodicea claims to be wealthy but is poor from the perspective of Jesus.[28] The wealth of Rome is inferior since it comes from commerce (Rev 17,18).[29] Finally, Babylon representing the bad wealth of Rome should be destroyed, while New Jerusalem is the reward for the true witnesses who have endured.[30] Royalty is not the first to argue that the crisis in Revelation is inside the churches, but he has made a more thorough study than any other person.[31] His argument is against the traditional view that persecution is the reason for Revelation.

The five options above mentioned have their strengths and weaknesses, but they all give us precious insights into the interpretation of Revelation. Since they all could not stand alone, they should be interdependent. Whenever we interpret Revelation, we need to remember that there

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[27] Robert M. Royalty, *The Streets of Heaven: The Ideology of Wealth in the Apocalypse of John* (Atlanta: Mercer University Press, 1998), 241.
[28] Royalty, *The Streets of Heaven*, 174.
[29] Royalty, *The Streets of Heaven*, 209.
[30] Royalty, *The Streets of Heaven*, 241-243.
[31] Duff, *Who Rides on the Beast?*, 10.

was no full-scale persecution shown in the apocalyptic part. Even though there is little historical evidence for persecution, we should respect the testimony of persecution articulated through Revelation as well as other New Testament writings. In addition, if we regard what John says as a simple exaggeration to magnify the "perceived" crisis or to protect his authority, the text will conceal its meaning in front of us. Furthermore, we should consider the possibility that the crisis could derive from the seven churches and the internal crisis could be closely related to the forced imperial cult.

When I explore what was the real problem that John dealt with in the letter part (Rev 2,3) and how we can understand the relationship between the letter part and the apocalyptic part (4-22), I will respect the text, considering these great insights from the five options.

The critical problem revealed in the letter part is theological rather than political.[32] Even though he mentions the threats of the imperial cult by local authorities (2:13), John's primary concern in Rev 2-3 is the false teachers and their teachings in the five churches except for the churches in Sardis and Laodicea.[33] Thus, he praises or rebukes them through Jesus's mouth, depending on how they deal with the opponents and their lessons. He also shows deep-rooted resentment against them by stigmatizing them with the word "Satan" (σατανᾶς) and the names of the most notorious heretic figures in the Jewish Scripture, "Balaam" (Βαλαάμ) and "Jezebel" (Ἰεζάβελ).[34] John uses the strong word "Satan" with intention because it appears five times in

[32] Fiorenza points out that we should read Revelation with both "anti-Roman" and "anti-Gnostic" interpretations because the Gnostics could make effective adaptations to the "syncretistic Roman culture and religion." Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation*, 114; Warren Carter also points out that "cultural accommodation" derived from the false teachers is the most dangerous threat in the seven messages. However, he interprets fornication symbolically. Warren Carter, *What Does Revelation Reveal?: Unlocking the Mystery* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011), 27-49.

[33] There is no mention of false teachers in these two churches. Jesus reproaches them only for spiritual indolence.

[34] Throughout the Book of Revelation, the word "Satan" appears 8 times. The noun σατανᾶς is used four times in 2:13,12:9, 20:2, and 20:7, while the genitive σατανα is used also four times in 2:9, 2:13, 2:24, and 3:9. Frederick W.

Rev 2-3 but three times to designate Satan itself after Rev 13. My dissertation will explore why John expresses hostility toward his outgroups with the word Satan and such biblical satanic figures, and how the letter part has relation to the apocalyptic part.

Table 1. John's Three Rivalrous Outgroups[35]

	Local Political Outgroup	Jewish Outgroup	Hellenistic Gnostic Outgroup
1. Ephesus			False Apostles (2:2) The Nicolaitans (2:6)
2. Smyrna		The Synagogue of Satan (2:9)	
3. Pergamum	Satan's Throne (2:13) Where Satan Lives (2:13)		The Teaching of Balaam (2:14) The Teaching of the Nicolaitans (2:15)
4. Thyatira			That Woman Jezebel (2:20) The Deep Things of Satan (2:24)
5. Sardis			
6. Philadelphia		The Synagogue of Satan (3:9)	
7. Laodicea			

John's opponents can fall into three outgroups: (1) local political outgroup, (2) Jewish outgroup, and (3) Hellenistic Gnostic outgroup.[36] To begin with, John's community seems to

Danker ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. "Satan."

[35] An ingroup is a group which a person belongs to, while an outgroup is a social group which a person does not identify. "Us" and "them" derive from these concepts.

[36] Recently, some scholars, such as Gaston and Wilson, regard the "synagogue of Satan" as gentiles promoting Jewish practices within the churches and identify them with the Hellenistic group. Duff, however, insists that they were two distinct groups and that the Jewish group was outside, but the Hellenistic group was inside. The group called the synagogue of Satan was outside John's community because there is no mention of a call for repentance in the letters to Smyrna and Philadelphia. On the other hand, the heresy found in Jezebel or the Nicolaitans was internal so that it was experienced inside the churches. Paul B. Duff, "The Synagogue of Satan: Crisis Mongering and The Apocalypse of John," in *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation*, ed. David L. Barr (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 151-155: Along with these distinct outgroups, Stephen S. Smalley states that there were three groups of believers within John's congregations: (1) Jewish Jesus's followers who came from the synagogue and still felt a loyalty to Judaism, (2) Hellenistic Jesus's followers who came from a

have been threatened into participating in the imperial cult by regional political authorities.[37] Especially, John uses the detestable term Satan two times to express hostility to Pergamum: "I know where you are living, where Satan's throne is (ὅπου ὁ θρόνος τοῦ σατανα). Yet you are holding fast to my name, and you did not deny your faith in me even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan lives (ὅπου ὁ σατανᾶς κατοικεῖ)" (2:13). Pergamum was the first Asian city permitted to build a temple for the worship of a living Emperor. For this reason, John's church there might have been in conflict with the imperial cult.[38] Thus, John stigmatizes the local authorities in Pergamum with the word Satan twice.

The second outgroups are Jewish at Smyrna and Philadelphia. Through the mouth of Jesus, John expresses extreme anger and hostility by calling them the "synagogue of Satan" (συναγωγὴ τοῦ σατανα) in 2:9, 3:9. Especially, Jesus mentions that he knows "the slander of those who call themselves Jews" (τὴν βλασφημίαν ἐκ τῶν λεγόντων Ἰουδαίους εἶναι ἑαυτοὺς) in 2:9.[39] Since the text does not explain what their slander is, we are not able to understand John's hostility toward them. Thus, we have to guess in the context. The following verses give us a hint: "the devil is about to throw some of you into prison" (2:10a). Besides, more numbers are expected to be executed (2:10b). Their slander enables the followers of Jesus to be accused and suffer legal

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pagan background and remained affected by the "dualist, pre-gnostic beliefs," and (3) Jesus's followers who have a "well-balanced Christology." The Jewish outgroup could allure Jewish believers from the churches, while the Hellenistic outgroup could be appealing to those who had a Hellenistic pagan background. Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation of John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 4-5.

[37] Cf. 1:9, 2:3, 2:10, and 3:8. Even John was exiled by authorities for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

[38] Smalley, *The Revelation of John*, 65-66. Many scholars point out that there was no evidence of the Roman full-scale persecution when Revelation was written, but local occasional persecutions were exercised by local authorities through informers' accusations.

[39] Bible verses are from NRSV.

penalties by Roman authorities in Smyrna.[40] Pliny's legal proceedings against believers at the beginning of the second century CE suggest that the initiative in accusing Jesus's followers was done by local people, and some Jews also may have taken part in the process.[41] Thus, Jews were informers to accuse them to local authorities, so that the synagogue could be an imminent threat to John's churches.

Here it is important to know that the term "Jews" is used positively but that those who call themselves Jews do not live as Jews should do. In this sense, John regards himself and his congregations who follow Jesus as true Jews, whereas Jews who do not believe in Jesus are not true Jews.[42] This is why John calls their synagogue the "synagogue of Satan" (συναγωγὴ τοῦ σατανα) unlike the Jews' claim to be the "synagogue of God" (συναγωγὴ τοῦ θεοῦ). Finally, Jesus promises that the Jews who belong to the synagogue of Satan will show their respect to the congregation in Philadelphia (3:9).[43] Because of the Jews' slander and unbelief of Jesus as the Savior, John labels the Jews with such a provocative phrase "synagogue of Satan."

The last outgroups are Hellenistic. John attacks Hellenistic Gnostic teachers with notorious heretic figures as well as the word Satan. It seems that those who are called the Nicolaitans[44] go around churches located in Asia Minor, giving false teachings to them. Jesus

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[40] Even though the word slander is often used in Revelation for speaking ill of God, it is used here in the more general sense of "slander." Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 162.

[41] Duff, "The Synagogue of Satan," 167; Aune*, Revelation 1-5*, 163-4.

[42] Aune*, Revelation 1-5*, 162; Some scholars have assumed that the phrase "synagogue of Satan" in 2:9 and 3:9 has anti-Semitic connotations. However, it is clear that the word "Jew" is used positively. Peder Borgen, "Polemic in the Book of Revelation," in *Illuminations by Philo of Alexandria: Selected Studies on Interpretation in Philo, Paul and the Revelation of John*, ed. Torrey Seland (Leiden, Neth.: Brill, 2021), 261.

[43] "I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you" (ἰδοὺ ποιήσω αὐτοὺς ἵνα ἥξουσιν καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν ἐνώπιον τῶν ποδῶν σου καὶ γνῶσιν ὅτι ἐγὼ ἠγάπησά σε) (3:9).

[44] A group of people called Nicolaitans appears only in Revelation. According to Irenaeus (*Adv. haer.* 1.26.3), the founder of the group was Nicolaus, one of the seven Hellenist leaders in Acts 6:5. However, he did not offer evidence outside of Revelation. Later, depending on Irenaeus' work, Hippolytus and Epiphanius attributed all of the Gnostic practices back to Nicolaus. Therefore, we are not sure that there is a direct relation between Nicolaus in Acts and the Nicolaitans in Revelation. Birger A. Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature* (Minneapolis:

praises the church in Ephesus for "hating the works of the Nicolaitans, which I (Jesus) also hate" (ὅτι μισεῖς τὰ ἔργα τῶν Νικολαϊτῶν ἃ κἀγὼ μισῶ) (2:6). On the contrary, he rebukes the church in Pergamum for "having some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans" (ἔχεις καὶ σὺ κρατοῦντας τὴν διδαχὴν τῶν Νικολαϊτῶν ὁμοίως) (2:15). The teaching of the Nicolaitans is considered to be equal to "the teaching of Balaam" (τὴν διδαχὴν Βαλαάμ), who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the people of Israel (Num 25) so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols and practice fornication (φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα καὶ πορνεῦσαι)" (2:14).[45] Balaam was one of the most vicious false prophets in the Jewish Scripture, who made the people of Israel corrupt religiously and sexually (Num 31:16).[46]

Besides, Jesus also reproaches the church in Thyatira for "tolerating that woman Jezebel (τὴν γυναῖκα Ἰεζάβελ), who calls herself a prophet and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols" (διδάσκει καὶ πλανᾷ τοὺς ἐμοὺς δούλους πορνεῦσαι καὶ φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα) (2:20). The actual name of the false female prophet is not known but she is called "Jezebel," who is notorious for establishing the worship of Baal officially in the Jewish Scripture (I Kings 16:31; 18:1-19; 19:1-2). The teaching of the woman "Jezebel" is very similar to that of Balaam and the Nicolaitans since their teachings enable John's congregations to "eat food sacrificed to idols" and to "practice fornication" (2:14, 2:20).[47]

Fortress Press, 2007), 36-37; Nevertheless, Nicolaus is quite related to Gnosticism as gnostics may have appealed to him as others appealed to other famous desciples such as James or Philip. Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature & History of Gnosticism* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1977), 305.

[45] It is unclear whether sexual immorality is literal or a metaphor for unfaithfulness to God. Ian Paul, *Revelation*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 94.

[46] Rudolph regards the teaching of Balaam as the contact of the Gnostics with the Old Testament. Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 304.

[47] Several prominent scholars such as Müller, Klauck, and Fiorenza argues that these symbolic names "Balaam" and "Jezebel" refer to the same group of male and female prophets called the Nicolaitans. James A. Kelhoffer, "The Relevance of Revelation's Date and the Imperial Cult for John's Appraisal of the Value of Christians' Suffering in Revelation 1-3," *Die Johannesapokalypse: Wissenshaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament*, ed. Jörg Frey,

Furthermore, Jesus mentions some people in Thyatira who do not hold "Jezebel's" teaching and have not learned the "depths of Satan as they say" (τὰ βαθέα τοῦ σατανα ὡς λέγουσιν, 2:24). The phrase the "depths of Satan" can be interpreted differently depending on who the subject is in "as they say" (ὡς λέγουσιν). If the subject of ὡς λέγουσιν is faithful Thyatiran believers, they labeled the teaching for what it is. On the other hand, if the subject is "Jezebel's" followers, it referred to something related to "some experience with the demonic-satanic realm" literally.[48] Considering the context and grammar, the latter is more persuasive. Even though it is not clear what the "depths of Satan" mean, it implies that "Jezebel" might have taught her followers to take part in idolatry and immorality with satanic knowledge.[49] Such an idea is found among certain pre-Gnostic teachers.[50]

Considering John's description of the Hellenistic Gnostic opponents, their instructions have pre-Gnostic features in some ways.[51] To begin with, they claim to have exclusive access to the gnosis (=secret knowledge) of Satan. This gnosis enables people to be freed from the world and its powers and guarantees their final salvation. This freedom they have already obtained (=realized salvation) allows them to live in peaceful co-existence with the Roman pagan society. Such Gnostic teachings make it possible for John's church members to take part in the pagan cult without giving up faith in God and Jesus Christ (2:14, 2:20). Consequently, this Gnostic freedom obtained by the exclusive gnosis may have provided "Jezebel" and the Nicolaitans with the

James A. Kelhoffer und Franz Toth (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 574.

[48] Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 265.

[49] John Christopher Thomas & Frank D. Macchia. *Revelation*, The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 109.

[50] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 207.

[51] Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 62-63, 76-77.

justification for ethical license.[52]

Under such a theological crisis, John regarded his opposite groups and their false teachings as more dangerous and harmful to his congregations because they weakened the churches' beliefs and caused them to take part in cultic activities. Accordingly, he felt a pastoral obligation to protect his churches from all the outgroups. To succeed in protecting his people, he needed to distinguish his ingroup from the harmful outgroups. That is why he used the term Satan and the notorious symbolic figures to stigmatize the false teachers and their teachings. Thus, John could prevent his people from breaking away from his Jesus-confessing congregations and effectively block such false teachers which could lead the members of the seven churches into becoming part of the syncretistic pagan society by participating in the emperor cult.

If John's critical theological concerns are understood, we could interpret the apocalyptic part (Rev. 4-22) properly. His work to solidify the identity of his congregations and their belief continues in the apocalyptic part. John tries to correct the false teachings from both sides and presents his sound and balanced theological ideas, such as Theology, Christology, Eschatology, Soteriology, and Ecclesiology.[53] Through this, John clarifies who they believe in as their Savior and who they are as Jesus's followers. In this sense, the letter and apocalyptic parts are relevant theologically.

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[52] Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation*, 117.

[53] He attacked the Jewish group who denied Jesus by proclaiming Jesus as the Savior throughout the entire book. On the other hand, he attacked the Hellenistic Gnostic group of the Nicolaitans in many ways: God worshipped as the Creator of the universe attacks the concept of two Gods, the Unknown God and Demiurge the creator (Rev 4); God's sovereignty over the universe opposes the worship of emperors (4); a slaughtered Lamb worshipped as the Savior is against both Jewish Ebionism and Gnostic Docetism (5); praises of all the creatures from the Three-Story Universe is in opposite to the Geocentric Universe (5); the Lamb leading the seven series attacks the Gnostic notion that the world is ruled by demonic powers and suffering comes from them (6); the great harlot who leads all the nations astray symbolizes the heretic prophetess "Jezebel" who seduces people (17): prohibition of worshipping angels is against gnostic worship of divine eaons (19); the conversion and participation of the kings of the nations in the kingdom of God is in opposition to the Gnostic three divided anthropology (Hylics, Psychics, and Pnuematics) (21); and the kingdom of God in the new heaven and earth overcomes the Gnostic radical dualism (21-22).

The statement is that John effectively protects his congregations and fortifies their identity from the false teachers by labeling them with the most negative term "Satan" (σατανᾶς) and the most notorious heretical figures such as Balaam (Βαλαάμ), and Jezebel (Ἰεζάβελ).

Methodology

I will employ social identity theory to analyze John's opponents in Rev 2-3. This method is a useful tool to explore how severe conflicts there were between groups, why John attacked them with the most negative stigmas, and what situation each church was in. I will introduce social identity theory briefly along with several important concepts to apply to the interpretation of the intergroup conflicts in Rev 2-3.

In the 1980s, social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner applied this theory to analyze social identity in intergroup relations, including prejudice and group conflicts.[54] A social group must include at least three people because two people (a dyad) are affected by interpersonal processes. A social group can be defined as a collection of more than two people with the same social identity. The group members have the same definition of who they are, what attributes they have in common, and how they are distinguished from specific outgroups. Group membership is about "collective self-construal" such as "We," "us," and "them." This social identity is different from personal identity. Personal identity is a "self-construal in terms of

[54] Karina V. Korostelina, *Social Identity and Conflict: Structures, Dynamics, and Implications* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 18. Other fields of social science also applied it to their studies. For example, the anthropological study explores the manifestation of social identity in culture and its impact on group boundaries (Barth 1969; Cohen 1986). Sociologists use it to analyze the interrelations between society and personality (Giddens 1991; Jenkins 1996). Political research focuses on the role of social identity in domestic and international conflicts (Brubaker 1996; Fisher 1997; Gellner 1994; Gurr 1970).

idiosyncratic personality attributes" which are not shared with others ("I") or "dyadic relationship" ("me" and "you").[55] People have as many social and personal identities as there are groups that they belong to or personal relationships they involve. However, depending on situations, only one salient identity is real. These identities can change quickly according to contextual changes. So, social identity is dependent on context.[56]

An individual belongs to several types of social groups with shared interests, values, and beliefs, such as family, sports team, gender, generation, ethnic group, religious group, and nation.[57] These groups can offer a person protection, security, and confidence originated from their "common identity," which is one crucial factor to unity and effective task performance in groups.[58] People tend to obtain a positive social identity through various groups.

Consequently, one of the positive social identity's results is the feeling and understanding of "we-ness." This feeling unifies a group and leads to common types of behavior and thinking.[59] Social identity works positively in most cases. Some researches, however, show that it can be negative. For example, many ethnic minorities who negatively feel their low status tend to choose membership in the highest status outgroup. This identification with the majority results in improving social identity.[60] In this regard, social identity has a considerable influence on one's

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[55] Michael A. Hogg, Dominic Abrams, and Marilynn B. Brewer, "Social Identity: The Role of Self in Group Processes and Intergroup Relations," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 20, no. 5 (2017): 571; Individual identity refers to a "set of individual features," whereas social identity is defined as a result of identification with a group or category which shares history, values, and beliefs. Korostelina, *Social Identity and Conflict*, 35.
[56] Michael A. Hogg, Dominic Abrams, Sabine Otten, and Steve Hinkle, "The Social Identity Perspective: Intergroup Relations, Self-Conception, and Small Groups," Small Group Research 35, no. 3 (2004), 251-53.
[57] John C. Turner, "Towards a cognitive redefinition of the social group," in *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, ed. Henri Tajfel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 15-17.
[58] Nyla R. Branscombe and Robert A. Baron, *Social Psychology*, 14th ed. (Uttar Pradesh, India: Pearson India Education, 2017) 401.
[59] Korostelina, *Social Identity and Conflict*, 19.
[60] Korostelina, *Social Identity and Conflict*, 136.

thinking and behavior. Now, I am going to review some important concepts.

Social Categorization and Prototypes

Social categorization is the "cognitive heart of social identity processes"[61] This social categorization needs "group prototypes." They are "cognitive representations of group own norms, where such norms are social regularities that are bounded by group memberships and describe behavior that defines group membership." These prototypes prescribe who we are, how the members behave according to group norms.[62]

When we categorize someone, we see the person through the lens of the group prototypes. Prototype-based perception of outgroup members is called "stereotyping," (The progress of focusing on people as a group, not on an individual is "depersonalization") while seeing ourselves in terms of the attributes of ingroup is "self-stereotyping." The prototypes play a key role in social categorization. Since this prototype represents groups, it is not average but ideal.[63]

Social categorization focuses on perceived similarities within groups and differences between groups to maximize intergroup distinctiveness.[64] There are two types of prototypes: "ingroup prototype" and "outgroup prototype." They are cognitive representations of ingroup and outgroup.[65] It is very important how closely members match the group prototype (=norm). If the members are highly identified with the group prototype, the group is attractive socially.[66]

If I apply this to Revelation 2-3, the extremely negative titles such as "Satan," "Balaam," and "Jezebel" are all outgroup prototypes to maximize the difference from John's ingroup and

[61] Hogg, "The Social Identity Perspective," 253.
[62] Hogg, "The Social Identity Perspective," 259.
[63] Hogg, "The Social Identity Perspective," 254.
[64] Hogg, "The Social Identity Perspective," 255.
[65] Hogg, "Social Identity," 572.
[66] Hogg, "The Social Identity Perspective," 257.

stereotype them the most effectively. In addition, the two churches in Smyrna and Philadelphia that received only strong approval from Jesus for their strong belief(=norm) were very attractive to the neighboring other outgroups.

Motivation and Mobility

Social identity processes are driven by two motivations: "self-enhancement" and "uncertainty reduction." These two motivations are based on the idea that groups seek to be better and distinct as well. People want to promote the prestige and status of their group since we have human motives for "self-enhancement and self-esteem." If we have a valued social identity and belong to a prestigious high-status group, our self-esteem is more enhanced.[67]

The other social motivation is uncertainty reduction. People tend to minimize uncertainty. "The more self-conceptually uncertain one is, the more one strives to belong to groups having clearly defined prototypes."[68] Due to these motivations, those who feel lower status or a sense of uncertain identity in their group tend to disidentify from their group and pursue an individual "mobility strategy" of "passing" (gaining acceptance) as members of the higher status group.[69]

These concepts are very useful for Revelation. The two churches in Pergamum and Thyatira received light approval and heavy disapproval from Jesus. The churches without unshaken faith (=with uncertain identity) would feel lower status in the Roman society so that some or many members accepted the accommodating teaching of the Nicolaitans and "Jezebel."

[67] Hogg "The Social Identity Perspective," 255-256.
[68] Hogg "The Social Identity Perspective," 256.
[69] Hogg "The Social Identity Perspective," 258. Hogg, "Social Identity," 573-74.

Social Comparison

Intergroup social comparison processes between salient groups seek to maximize differences between self, as ingroup member, and other, as outgroup member. By contrast, interpersonal or intragroup social comparison processes attempt to look for uniformity and assimilation. In this manner, the two social comparisons are quite different. According to Tajfel (1972, p. 296), social comparisons between groups aim at the establishment of positive ingroup distinctiveness between one's own and other groups.[70]

Leadership and Deviance

The social identity analysis of leadership considers leaders to be one of the key structural differentiations within groups. "Leadership endorsement and leadership effectiveness" depends on how prototypical the leader is supposed to be. In salient groups, prototypical members who are depersonalized and conformed to ingroup norms usually identify more strongly with the group. Accordingly, they appear to exercise greater influence than less prototypical members. They are provided with status and the ability to obtain obedience from others. They also appear to have easy influence over ingroup members and their behavior is internally attributed. This constructs a "leadership persona for the group that further facilitates effective leadership." Leaders who are not highly prototypical are less trusted, so they still need to prove their membership.[71]

In contrast with leadership, deviant members are people who are not prototypical, so they are less attractive or trusted than more prototypical members. Marques's analysis of the "black

[70] Hogg "The Social Identity Perspective," 255-56.
[71] Hogg "The Social Identity Perspective," 262.

sheep effect" shows that those who occupy the prototypical boundary between ingroup and outgroup are more disliked if they are ingroup members than outgroup members (Marque & Paez, 1994). This is because deviants threaten the integrity of group norms.[72]

The accommodation teachings of the Nicolaitans and "Jezebel" which could lead to living with dignity in cultic culture were so attractive that many of the church members in Pergamon and Thyatira chose to follow the false teachings. To restore his damaged leadership and minimize the number of deviant members who were less prototypical, John represents ingroup prototypes and norms in the apocalyptic part (Rev 4-22). The prototypes and norms teach his congregation who they are, what they believe, and how to live as Jesus's followers in this world.

Three Stages of Social Identity Process

Although it varies depending on scholars, the process of social identity consists of three components: "social categorization," "social identification," and "social comparison."

The first one is social categorization. According to Turner, social categorizations are "discontinuous divisions of the social world into distinct classes or categories."[73] With such classes or categories, we categorize people into groups that have various group prototypes (=norms). For example, when we meet a person for the first time, we will immediately find out something about his sex (he is male), age (he looks very young), ethnicity (he looks Asian), education (from his use of language), and religion (from his nonverbal behavior). We categorize him based on numerous hints or norms about social groups that he belongs to.[74] Likewise, we

[72] Hogg "The Social Identity Perspective," 263.
[73] Turner, "Towards a cognitive redefinition of the social group," 17.
[74] Howard Giles, Scott Reid, and Jake Harwood, "Introducing the Dynamics of Intergroup Communication," in *The Dynamics of Intergroup Communication*, ed. Howard Giles, Scott Reid, and Jake Harwood (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2010), 1-2.

also categorize ourselves into various social groups.

The second one is social identification. Once we have categorized ourselves as part of the desired group, we have identified with it complying with the group's shared and common systems of values (=group prototypes or norms).[75] In other words, we internalize and assimilate the ingroup's norms or beliefs. We also need to assimilate to the valued members of the ingroup we belong to.[76] This stage enables us to form a positive social identity from the desired ingroup at emotional and cognitive levels.

The last one is social comparison. As we categorize ourselves and identify with a specific group, we distinguish ourselves ("ingroup")[77] from others ("outgroup") and keep comparing both to determine whether we are good or bad in various areas such as views of social reality, religious beliefs, or values.[78] The reason to compare ours to others is that there is no objective standard to evaluate ourselves against.[79] In general, we positively evaluate our ingroup to enhance our self-image by exaggerating the ingroup's similarities ("ingroup bias or favoritism"), while we negatively evaluate the outgroup highlighting the differences between groups ("outgroup derogation").[80] By identifying ourselves with the ingroup, we become proud of their ingroup and form positive self-esteem in it.

Ingroup members must have a strong social identity because it provides protection, security, assurance, and certainty to ingroup members. On the other hand, the feeling of lack of

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[75] Turner, "Towards a cognitive redefinition of the social group," 17-18.
[76] Hogg "The Social Identity Perspective," 249, 259.
[77] Ingroup has some features: (1) the perceived similarity of members; (2) mutual attraction between members or social cohesion; (3) mutual esteem; (4) emotional empathy or contagion; (5) altruism ad cooperation, and (6) attitudinal and behavioral uniformity. Turner, "Towards a cognitive redefinition of the social group," 29.
[78] Branscombe and Baron, *Social Psychology*, 141.
[79] Branscombe and Baron, *Social Psychology*, 142.
[80] Turner, "Towards a cognitive redefinition of the social group," 23-24.

we-ness and permanence, fear, uncertainty, or conflict within an ingroup can cause a "social identity crisis." Furthermore, it leads to a lack of sense of the ingroup's values and group loyalties, making ingroup members shift their social identity by moving into other groups.[81]

To help his congregation facing a social identity crisis do reidentification, John represents the ingroup prototypes and norms which are essentially needed for positive social identification. These ingroup prototypes and norms suggest who they are, what they believe, and how they live in this world as witnesses of Jesus Christ. These norms include various theological ideas, such as Theology, Christology, Eschatology, Soteriology, and Ecclesiology.

Dissertation Plan

In the introduction, I review the five options proposed to solve the discrepancy between Revelation and historical evidence and between the letter part (Rev 2-3) and the apocalyptic part (4-22). Then considering the five options, I raise a question about what John's real concern in Rev 2-3 is and why he uses the term "Satan" to label his opponents. Then, I introduce social identity theory to analyze the dynamic power structure between John and his opponents in the letter part.

Chapter 1 deals with the pre-understanding of Revelation such as its authorship, genre, and sociopolitical situation the seven churches in Asia Minor faced. They were threatened by increasing demand for the imperial cult.

Chapter 2 examines local political outgroups in Pergamum as the first social category.

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[81] Korostelina, *Social Identity and Conflict*, 17; Scott A, Reid and Grace L. Anderson, "Language, Social Identity, and Stereotyping," in *The Dynamics of Intergroup Communication*, ed. Howard Giles, Scott Reid, and Jake Harwood (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2010), 95.

John calls Pergamum “where Satan’s throne is” and “where Satan lives” (2:13).

Chapter 3 investigates Jewish outgroups in both Smyrna and Philadelphia (2:9 and 3:9) as the second social category. John does not hesitate to label their meeting with the “synagogue of Satan.”

Chapter 4 inquiries into Hellenistic Gnostic outgroups as the third social category. I explore the works of the Nicolaitans in Ephesus (2:6), the teaching of Balaam in Pergamum (2:14), the teaching of the Nicolaitans in Pergamum (2:15), that woman “Jezebel” in Thyatira (2:20), The depths of Satan in Thyatira (2:24), and the features of the “deep things of Satan”: secret knowledge (Gnosis), realized eschatology, and spiritual arrogance.

In chapter 5, I analyze the intergroup and intragroup conflicts between John’s ingroup and his outgroup.

Chapter 6 interprets the apocalyptic part (4-22) as John’s presentation of theological ingroup prototypes and norms. In Rev 4-5, John clarifies what we believe and who God and the Lamb are (the doctrine of God and Christology) in contrast to the Jewish and Hellenistic ideas. In the rest of the apocalyptic part, he answers the questions about the ingroup identity (Who are we and how do we live as Jesus’s followers?” (Ecclesiology)) by presenting “ingroup prototypes” and “outgroup prototypes.”

Finally, after summarizing what I have done, I conclude. Then, I make some suggestions for further study.

Chapter 1

Pre-Understanding of the Book of Revelation

Who is the Author?

Before exploring the authorship of Revelation, David Aune brings up a critical issue. The problem of authorship was one of the important issues in traditional biblical studies. However, this issue has not been a critical one for several reasons. The first reason is that many biblical writings in both the Old and the New Testaments do not have their author's name. For example, even the four Gospels are originally anonymous and the process of adding titles was done around the mid-second century CE.[82] On the contrary, Jewish apocalypses use the pseudonym of famous Jewish Scripture figures such as Enoch, Abraham, or Ezra to make their writings more authoritative and reliable.[83] The other reason is that many biblical books underwent many works of rewriting and revision so that the "last author-editor" is more proper than the concept of "author." Especially, apocalyptic literature tends to use collected sources which exist previously. It is likely that one final author-editor collects several previous materials, edits them, and fixes the final version. In this respect, the method of source criticism is needed for authorship in many cases.[84]

Unlike many biblical books and other Jewish apocalypses, Revelation is neither

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[82] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, xlviii.
[83] Lorenzo DiTimmaso, "Pseudonymity and the Revelation of John," *Revealed Wisdom: Studies in Apocalyptic in Honour of Christopher Rowland*, ed. John Ashton (Boston: Brill, 2014), 305.
[84] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, xlviii.

anonymous nor pseudonymous. Even though Revelation could have more authority if it is pseudonymous, the author clarifies his name. John J. Collins offers two explanations for this. First, since Jesus Christ was the ultimate authority, the author did not need any other venerated figure for pseudonymity.

> Revelation's lack of pseudonymity reflects the heightened eschatological fervor of the early Christian community and its greater receptivity for apocalyptic revelations. In departing from the use of pseudonymity, Revelation merely dropped one of the accrediting devices of apocalyptic style which was found superfluous in the historical context.[85]

For this reason, the *Shepherd of Hermas* is not pseudonymous either.[86] However, as the eschatological fervor decreased in the second century, pseudonymity reappeared in the Christian apocalypses. Second, many ancient Jewish apocalypses use *ex eventu* prophecy (postdiction or foretelling after the event), so this literary device needs a venerated figure from the past. The early Christians, however, do not need it because Jesus's coming leading to the end of the world is apparent.[87]

Likewise, the author reveals his name "John" four times in Rev 1:1, 4, 9; 22:8, but he simply adds "servant" (1:1), "prophet" (1:3; 22:7, 9), and "a fellow servant" (22:9).[88] Even

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[85] J. J. Collins, "Pseudonymity, Historical Reviews and the Genre of the Revelation of John," *CBQ* 39 (1977): 329-43, cited in DiTimmaso, "Pseudonymity and the Revelation of John," 307. Richard Bauckham also explains why the author of Revelation uses his own name, not a pseudonym. Since he lives between Jesus's first coming and his second coming, his own authority is greater than that of his predecessors who lived before Jesus came to the world. In other words, he is experiencing the "final eschatological fulfillment" to which the whole prophetic tradition of the Old Testament had ultimately pointed. Of course, John's authority lies not in himself but in the revelation of Jesus Christ to which he bears prophetic witness (1:1-2). Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 11.

[86] Russell S. Morton, *Recent Research on Revelation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014), 15.

[87] DiTimmaso, "Pseudonymity and the Revelation of John," 307.

[88] Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 2.

though there is a lack of information about John in the text, it is sure that the person was well known to his immediate readers. That is why he did not have to offer a further introduction.[89] Accordingly, who is this "John" has been problematic since antiquity. We will investigate some possible characters that have been suggested.

The first person is John the apostle, who was the son of Zebedee and one of Jesus's disciples. He is often believed to be the author of the Fourth Gospel and the "beloved disciple" in the Gospel (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7; 21:20). The external evidence (from testimony in the early church) for the authorship of John the apostle is very strong, while the internal evidence (from features of Revelation's wring style, grammar, and content) is not strong. In the early second century, many early patristic writers identified John the apostle as the author of Revelation. For the first time, Justin Martyr wrote that John the apostle was the author of Revelation in 155 CE. Around 180 CE, Irenaeus also considered the apostle John the author of Revelation as well as the Fourth Gospel and John's letters (*Adv. haer*. 4.20.11). Other well-known patristic writers such as Clement of Alexandria (*Quis div.* 42), Hippolytus of Rome (*Antichr.* 35-36), Tertullian (*Praescr.* 36.3), and Origen (*Comm.* Jo. 2.4) all attributed Revelation to John the apostle.[90] By this time, the authorship of John the apostle was widely accepted, and this external evidence is quite robust.

In the mid-third century, some people began to make a different voice. Dionysius of Alexander rejected this opinion that the apostle John wrote Revelation, opposing the idea of an earthly millennium drawn from Revelation. Rather, he suggested that someone else called John composed Revelation. His arguments relied on the internal evidence, not on the external. From

[89] Fanning, *Revelation*, 25.
[90] Fanning, *Revelation*, 26.

his viewpoint, there are many differences between Revelation and the other Johannine books (the Fourth Gospel and John's letters) in wring style, grammar, and idea. Finally, he indicates that there was more than one John related to the church in Ephesus (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl*. 7.25.26.).[91] Recent scholars who think that the apostle is not the author of Revelation pay attention to the differences Dionysius found.[92]

As Dionysius observes, there are critical differences between Revelation and other Johannine books. The latter books have a smooth style without any grammatical irregularities, while Revelation is notorious for its grammatical oddities and its complicating style and structure. At this point, Buist M. Fanning asks us to take good care of these differences, because they could derive from the difference in genre or apocalyptic sources which the author used. John could have the ability to vary his writing style in a different level of Greek. This difference could be due to different secretaries who wrote down what John said.[93]

Although the internal evidence shows a strong possibility that the author of Revelation could be different from one of the Johannine books, why did many church fathers from the early second to the mid-third centuries attribute the authorship to the apostle John without hesitation? If we consider the historical situation in which they were, it could be easy to understand why they did. At that time, the church fathers were having a fierce battle with heresies, especially Gnosticism which was one of the greatest threats throughout the history of Christianity. If the author of Revelation is John the apostle, the church fathers could obtain a powerful weapon secured by an apostolic authority because John in Revelation seems to fight against false teachers

[91] Aune, *Revelation*, lii.
[92] Fanning, *Revelation*, 26.
[93] Fanning, *Revelation*, 27.

with Gnostic ideas. In other words, their situation caused them to believe the authorship of John the apostle.

When we think of the authorship reversely, we can decide that the apostle John is not the author of Revelation. If the author was John the apostle, there is no reason to conceal the fact that he was "the apostle John" because he had a severe fight with false teachers who tried to destroy his churches with false teachings. Many of the church members felt attracted to their teachings. The title "apostle" is far more authoritative than "prophet" so that his apostolicity could be the most powerful weapon to the fight. He is expected to mention some experiences of the Lord's ministry on the earth and some words which he heard from Jesus. The author, however, never did so and never relied on the authority of the apostle John.[94] Therefore, we need to seek another "John."

Another "John" could be John the "elder" or "presbyter." John the elder appears in 2 John 1, 3 John 1, as well as in some fragments (120 CE) attributed to Papias, the bishop of Hierapolis. Based on these fragments, Eusebius wrote as follows (*Hist. eccl.* 3.29.2-4):

> And if anyone chanced to come who had been a follower of the elders, I would enquire as to the discourses of the elders, what Andrew or what Peter said, or what Philip, or what Thomas or James, or what John or Matthew or any other of the Lord's disciples [said]; and the things which Aristion and John the elder, disciples of the Lord, say.[95]

Eusebius interpreted Papias' fragment as referring to two different Johns, John the apostle and John the elder. He also thought that John the apostle was the author of the Fourth Gospel and John the elder was the author of Revelation.[96] However, many scholars oppose two Johns, saying

[94] Fanning, *Revelation*, 28.
[95] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, liii.
[96] Following the testimony of Eusebius, Martin Hengel suggests that John the elder wrote Revelation in 68-70 CE

that Eusebius misunderstood the statement.[97] Besides, there is no objective indication that the one wrote the Gospel and the other Revelation.[98]

The last "John" is a prophet John, one of the church leaders, who was well known to the churches in Asia Minor in the late first century but unknown to us. We have to respect the fact that the author never identifies himself with John the apostles or John the elder, who has far more authority than a prophet John. He was surely influenced by the apostle John, which could explain the similarities in theology and theme with other Johannine books.[99] Furthermore, he must have been a Palestinian Jew because there is much strong evidence:[100] (1) He uses the Hebrew text of the Old Testament over one hundred times. (2) The apocalyptic genre he employs originated from Palestinian Judaism. Asia Minor did not know this kind of genre at that time. (3) He is familiar with the Jewish temple and cult in Jerusalem. (4) The author uses Semitizing Greek so that he is not a native Greek speaker but a native Aramaic speaker. (5) After the first Jewish revolt in 66-73 CE, many Jews left Palestine. In a nutshell, the author of Revelation is John a Jewish prophet sharing the apostle John's theology.

Mixed Genres

Finding the right genre of literature has an important role in how to understand a written work. Misunderstanding the genre leads to misinterpreting the text. It is hard to define the genre

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and one of his pupils finally edited it at the end of the first century. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, liii. MacDonald also thinks that the body of Revelation from 1:9b to 22:7 was written by the elder John in Papias' fragment and four appearances of the name "John" in 1:1-9a and 22:8-21 were added by a final editor after the death of the elder John. MacDonald, *The Dionysian Gospel*, 15-16.

[97] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, li.

[98] Osborne, Revelation, 3-4.

[99] Fanning, *Revelation*, 28.

[100] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, l.

to which Revelation belongs because Revelation contains features of three different literary genres: apocalypse, prophecy, and letter. The author identifies his writing as apocalyptic, prophetic, and epistolary in 1:1-5. He scores the latter two genres in his epilogue in 22:10-21.[101]

First, the title of the book Apocalypse (Revelation) comes from the first verse: "The apocalypse of Jesus Christ" (1:1). The term "apocalypse" is translated as "revelation" or "uncovering." John a prophet used this term to highlight the origin of his vision, not to refer to his book's genre.[102] For John who introduces himself as a prophet, he likely thought that he was prophesying what Jesus showed to him as apocalyptic. Gregory Beal sees through John's intention, saying "The book is a heightened form of prophecy, which can be referred to as 'apocalyptic.'"[103] Nonetheless, the latter part of the book (4-22) shares many apocalyptic features. There are many Jewish and Christian apocalyptic books from the second century BCE to the first century CE. Revelation has many apocalyptic features in common with other apocalyptic books. It is very difficult to define apocalypse, but there is a helpful definition proposed by a team of scholars within SBL led by John J. Collins:

> Apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.[104]

Apocalypse is a "genre of revelatory literature" in a narrative style. It includes an

[101] Fanning, *Revelation*, 31.
[102] Morton, *Recent Research on Revelation*, 13.
[103] Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, A Commentary on the Greek Text (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 181.
[104] Morton, *Recent Research on Revelation*, 15-16.

otherworldly being to mediate a revelation to a human being, which discloses a transcendent reality. According to this definition, Revelation belongs to Apocalypse. It frequently refers to many interpreting angels as otherworldly mediators throughout the book. It also includes an otherworldly journey where John sees transcendent realities in the apocalyptic part (4-22). This type of journey is not found in Jewish prophetic literature. The transcendent realities cover from cosmogony to eschatology (the end of the world) in terms of time, while they cover from heaven to underworld in terms of space.[105]

The author keeps reminding us of its apocalyptic character by inserting his expression " I saw" (εἶδον) over forty-five times in the apocalyptic part and by using the phrase "in the Spirit" (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10) emphasizing the process of receiving visions.[106]

While John uses "apocalypse" just one time (1:1), he uses prophetic language many times throughout the book. The noun "prophecy" is used seven times (1:3; 11:6; and so on) the verb "to prophesy" twice (10:11; and so on), and the title "prophet" eight times (10:7; and so on).[107] Especially, in Rev 10:11, John is told that he must again prophesy to peoples and nations, which confirms his prophetic role.[108] In addition, most symbols need no explanation and can be understood in the light of the story and symbolism of the Hebrew prophetic tradition such as Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah. Over 250 verses in the book contain one or more allusions to an Old Testament passage.[109] Thus, it is clear that John a Jewish follower of Jesus had a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament. Therefore, Bauckham understands Revelation as "the climax of

[105] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, lxxvi-lxxxii.
[106] Fanning, *Revelation*, 31.
[107] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 582.
[108] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, lxxv.
[109] Fanning, *Revelation*, 40-41.

prophecy" saying, "John was writing what he understood to be a work of prophetic scriptures, the climax of prophetic revelation, which gathered up the prophetic meaning of the Old Testament scriptures and disclosed how it was being and was to be fulfilled in the last days." [110] On the other hand, David Aune, considering its apocalyptic and prophetic features, sees Revelation as a "prophetic apocalypse." He thinks that the first version of Revelation (4:1-22:9) was an apocalypse, and the prophetic expansion (1-3; 22:10-21) was added to it later. [111]

Revelation has an obvious letter framework in Rev 1:4-5; 22:21. Besides, it contains seven independent letters (2-3) addressed to the seven churches located in Asia Minor in the late first century. John certainly wants his readers to know that his book is a letter. Like Paul's letters, in general, letters in the New Testament were written to specific Christians in a specific time, space and situation.[112] The Book of Revelation was also written to John's congregations he knew and for whom he felt a pastoral responsibility. For this reason, Eugene Boring sees Revelation as a "pastoral letter."[113] However, it is not a personal letter but a public letter that can be read aloud in the worship. Such a letter framework shows that Revelation deals with the concrete problems the original readers face.

Likewise, Revelation has mixed genres in it and consists of two parts, the letter part (1-3) and the apocalyptic part (4-22). Therefore, it is important how to understand the relationship between the two.

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[110] Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies in the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), xi, cited in Fanning, *Revelation*, 32.
[111] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, lxxv-lxxvi, lxxxix-xc.
[112] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, lxxiv-lxxv.
[113] M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation*, Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1989), 5; Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation*, 166.

Chapter 2

Social Categorization I: Local Political Outgroups

Imperial Cult in Asian Minor

Like all the letters in the New Testament, Revelation was written as a public pastoral letter with apocalyptic imagery by John a prophet with a pastoral obligation to address concrete difficulties of its original hearer-readers in a limited space and time. To understand this book, we need to examine the political and religious situations the original hearer-readers faced.[114]

According to the external evidence of Irenaeus (140-202 CE) that John witnessed the visions at the end of the reign of Domitian (81-96), Revelation is traditionally dated at 95 or 96 CE. But modern scholars have proposed a variety of other dates from the reign of Claudius (41-54) to the time of Trajan (98-117). Most scholars have decided on the time of Nero (56-68) or Domitian, with the great majority preferring Domitian.[115] There is some decisive internal evidence in Revelation. John used a piece of tradition derived from the destruction of Jerusalem temple (70 CE) in 11:1-2, but he, interpreting the temple and altar as the Christian community, added a new meaning to the temple tradition.[116] In addition, the name of Babylon for Rome (Rev. 17) was used in Jewish and Christian literature after the destruction of Jerusalem because Rome had besieged and destroyed Jerusalem just as Babylon had done before. This fact shows that

[114] Collins, *Crisis & Catharsis,* 50.
[115] Fanning, *Revelation*, 28.
[116] Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (New York: Oxford University Press), 141-143.

Revelation was written after 70. This internal evidence of Revelation seems to fit the reign of Domitian.[117] For these reasons, no convincing reason exists to turn down Irenaeus' argument.

Now, we need to know what kind of persecution the seven churches in Asia Minor experienced at the end of Domitian's reign. The description of Christian persecutions presented in the apocalyptic part (6:9; 7:14; 11:7; 12:17; 13:7; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2; 20:4) is in discord with the situation of the seven churches in the letter part (1:9; 2:13) as well as historical evidence. Thus, it is critical to know the range and severity of persecution to understand the setting related to the imperial cult in Revelation.[118]

Based on some Roman sources which describe Domitian's rule as cruel, many older commentaries insist that the Christian persecutions under Domitian are "severe, empire-wide, and orchestrated from Rome." According to Leonard Thompson, the evilness of Domitian found in Roman standard sources was produced as rhetoric just after Domitian's death in Trajan's time to paise Emperor Trajan as an ideal emperor.[119] He also did not intensify the imperial cult more than his previous emperors or successors.[120] Consequently, many scholars have changed their stance and a proper solution has emerged. The seven churches in Asia Minor were exposed to various kinds of hostility and affliction for their belief in Jesus Christ, but it was "localized and sporadic, not empire-wide and organized from the top."[121] It included social condemnation and economic revenge for not participating fully in the imperial cult and the commercial life of the society. Such an environment could cause Jesus's followers to be in prison or to be put to death

[117] Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John*, 138-140.
[118] Fanning, *Revelation*, 30.
[119] Thompson, *The book of Revelation*, 97-99.
[120] Thompson, *The book of Revelation*, 104-107.
[121] Fanning, *Revelation*, 30.

by local authorities from time to time.[122]

We can see these examples in the letter part: John is banished in Patmos for the word of God" (1:9); The church in Smyrna suffers from affliction and poverty as well as slander (2:9); The devil is about to throw some of them into prison (2:10); Antipas was killed for where Satan lives (place for imperial cult) (2:13); A general trial is only expected to occur (3:10); The churches in Sardis and Laodicea do not have any persecution or threat from the society. Rather, their real problems are indolence (3:2-3) and complacency due to wealth (3:17). The situation in the seven churches is in accord with localized and sporadic harassments and persecutions, not full-fledged persecutions.

In this respect, there is no proof of more severe and full-scale persecutions at the time of John's composition of Revelation. Nevertheless, the more intensive religious and social resistance to Jesus followers' exclusive belief in only one God and one Jesus is formidable enough to make them feel threatened by greater persecution which could occur any time. All the references to massacres, martyrdoms, wars against God's people (6:9; 7:14; 11:7; 12:17; 13:7; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2; 20:4) in the apocalyptic part are all about the coming extreme persecution during the last tribulation related to Jesus's return. It seems that John and the direct readers expect the great persecution to come immediately.[123] This is why the apocalyptic part is different from the letter part and historical evidence.

Now, I turn to the issue of the imperial cult in Asia Minor. Why was the imperial cult so widespread and popular in Asia Minor where the seven churches were located (Rev 13) even though Domitian did not force all the Roman provinces to do it? It is a critical question. The

[122] Fanning, *Revelation*, 30.
[123] Fanning, *Revelation*, 30.

provinces, as well as the cities, promoted the worship of Domitian spontaneously. It is more accurate that the provinces competed for Domitian's favor to obtain more financial support directly from the Roman Emperor Domitian.[124] This phenomenon was noticeable in Asia Minor after the provincial assembly of Asia initiatively constructed an imperial cult temple for Domitian and the Flavian family in Ephesus in 89 or 90 CE. Thirteen inscriptions that came from the dedication of this temple were discovered. They were all produced by the order of cities from throughout the province.[125] They have similar contents, beginning with " To Emperor Domitian Caesar Sebastos Germanicus." Their contents include the name of the proconsul, the name of the demos who made the statue, the benefactor who provided the statue on behalf of the city, and the name of the provincial high priest. Steven Friesen presents one inscription on a temple base commissioned by the city of Aphrodisias for example:

> To Emperor [[Domitian]] Caesar Sebastos [[Germanicus]]. When Marcus Fulvius Gillo was proconsul. The demos of the Aphrodisians, devoted to Caesar, being free and autonomous from the beginning by the grace of the Sebastoi, erected (this statue) by their own grace on the occasion of (the dedication of) Asia's common temple of the Sebastoi in Ephesos, because of reverence toward the Sebastoi and (because of) goodwill toward the neokoros city of the Ephesians. Supervised by Arist[ion son of] Artemidoros son of Kalli […], priest of Pluto and Kore and neopoios of the goddess Aphrodite, when Tiberius Claudius Pheseinos was high priest of Asia [[erasure]].[126]

This inscription indicates that the province and the cities in it voluntarily welcome the imperial cult.

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[124] Alan S. Bandy, "Persecution and the Purpose of Revelation with Reference to Roman Jurisprudence," *Bulletin for Biblical Research 23*, no. 3 (2013): 383.
[125] Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John*, 43-44.
[126] Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John*, 44-46.

Taken together, it is likely that John the author was exiled from Ephesus in Asia Minor where the practice of imperial cult was highly promoted. His banishment was caused by direct conflict related to the local emperor worship rather than by the Roman Empire or the Roman Emperor Domitian. His refusal seemed to be regarded as stubbornness and resistance leading to punishment by local authorities. Since he was not a Roman citizen, he avoided going to Rome for additional trials.[127] It can be easily inferred that any member of the churches in Asia Minor could be in trouble anytime and anywhere like their leader John. This is their sociopolitical situation at the time of John's composition.

"Where Satan's Throne is" and "Where Satan Lives" in Pergamum (2:13)

Through the letter to the church in Pergamum, John a prophet helps Jesus's followers categorize local authorities as one of their outgroups. As we examined above, the regional political authorities seem to have threatened them into participating in the local imperial cult.[128] To notify their dangerous threat effectively, John uses the detestable term Satan two times:[129] "I know where you are living, where Satan's throne is (ὅπου ὁ θρόνος τοῦ σατανα). Yet you are holding fast to my name, and you did not deny your faith in me even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan lives (ὅπου ὁ σατανᾶς κατοικεῖ)" (2:13).

Throughout Revelation, the author employs the word Satan eight times, but two of them

[127] Bandy, "Persecution and the Purpose of Revelation with Reference to Roman Jurisprudence," 383.
[128] Cf. 1:9, 2:3, 2:10, and 3:8. Even John was exiled by local authorities for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.
[129] Steven J. Friesen, "Satan's Throne, Imperial Cults and the Social Settings of Revelation," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament.* 27, no. 3 (2005): 365.

are used for this one verse,[130] which indicates that John esteems "Satan's throne" as a major threat to his faith community. According to the text, Jesus admits that they are in a dangerous situation since "Satan's throne" is located near the church in Pergamum. The text does not provide any details of what "Satan's throne" is so that we do not know whether it refers to a specific place in Pergamum in the late first century.[131]

Historically, Pergamum was a stronghold under nominal Persian rule around the fifth century BCE. During the Hellenistic period, the Attalid dynasty made this city the capital of the Kingdom of Pergamum in 281-133 BCE. The dynasty did its best to change it into one of the key cultural centers of the Greek world. Since Pergamum was a political and religious center, many Hellenistic kings built a series of great national temples for the principal cults of Zeus Soter, Athena Nicephorus, Dionysus Cathegemon, and Asklepios Soter on its summit plateau. In addition to these cults, the Hellenistic kings promoted an explicit ruler-cult by calling themselves "Soter" or "Theos." Under the Roman Empire, Pergamum continued to be the political and religious center in the Province of Asia.[132]

Unlike the previous Hellenistic kings, the early Roman emperors were reluctant to allow a personal cult. Even though Augustus permitted to build temples for himself at Pergamum and Nicomedia in 29 BCE, the cult of the living emperor was not for Romans but for non-Romans (Dio Cass. 51.20.6-7; cf. Suet. *Aug*. 52). The Provincial temple at Pergamum is depicted on many coins of the city (*BMC Mysia*, Perg., from No. 236, of Augustus), which stimulated the imperial cult in other provinces (Tac. *Ann*. 4.37). Later, local authorities made an effort to make

[130] 2:9, 2:13(X2), 2:24, 3:9, 12:9, 20:2, and 20:7. Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon* , s.v. "Satan."
[131] Fanning, *Revelation,* 136.
[132] Colin J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 78-82.

Roman subjects observe the cult to win emperors' favor (Dio Cass. 51.20.7). Likewise, the worship of the living Roman emperor was added to cults of Anatolian and Olympian gods. It was Pergamum that was the center of the imperial cult in Asia and that is why Jesus calls Pergamum the place where "Satan's throne" is.[133]

If we look at the phrase "Satan's throne" throughout Revelation, it is apparent that "Satan's throne" (ὁ θρόνος τοῦ σατανα) on the earth is in opposition to "God's throne" in heaven (ὁ θρόνος ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ) presented in Rev. 4. This Satan's throne also reappears in 13:2, where the dragon (=Satan) gave (ἔδωκεν, past tense) it (=the first beast) his throne (τὸν θρόνον αὐτου) with great authority. In the following verses (13:3-4), the whole earth worshiped the beast whose deadly wound was healed like the Lamb (Rev 5), saying "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?" These Satan's throne and the dragon's throne are related to the imperial cult.[134] This throne is mentioned one more time at 16:10, where the fifth angel poured his bowl on the throne of the beast (ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον τοῦ θηρίου).[135] The beast's kingdom (ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ) was plunged into darkness immediately. In this sense, the throne of Satan and the beast's throne are deeply connected to their kingdom and rule. Taken together, Satan's throne on earth keeps God's true kingdom and rule from being realized on earth by making people worship him.

Jesus praises their strong loyalty to Jesus, although Antipas, one of the faithful believers, was killed recently. The text also does not give us any information of who Antipas is and why he was killed. Especially, Jesus calls him "my faithful witness" (ὁ μάρτυς μου ὁ πιστός μου). These terms are used to describe Jesus's faithfulness to God even until death (1:5; 3:14):[136] "From Jesus

[133] Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, 82-85.
[134] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 182.
[135] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 182.
[136] Fanning, *Revelation,* 137.

Christ, who is the faithful witness" (ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός); "the faithful and true witness" (ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός). Surely, Antipas was killed due to his faithful witness. The fact that Jesus mentions only one specific death shows that other deaths and full-scale persecutions had not occurred.[137] It is inferred that Antipas' death was done by local political authorities concerning the local imperial cult of Pergamum.[138] However, Jesus's followers in the church of Pergamum would have lived with a fear of political and social hostility toward their faithful witness.

Historically, Pergamum became the first Asian city allowed to build a temple for emperor worship. For this reason, this imperial cult might have caused a severe problem in John's church in Pergamum.[139] Besides, the proconsul stayed here since Pergamum was the principal city of the Roman province of Asia Minor. So many believers were brought here to be judged after being accused by informers, and Antipas was killed here.[140]In this sense, Satan's throne is related to the imperial cult and the proconsul's judgment seat. Thus, John stigmatizes the local authorities in Pergamum with the term Satan twice.

[137] Fanning, *Revelation,* 137.
[138] Friesen, "Satan's Throne, Imperial Cults and the Social Settings of Revelation," 365.
[139] Smalley, *The Revelation of John*, 65-6. Many scholars point out that there was no evidence of the Roman full-scale persecution when Revelation was written, but local occasional persecutions were exercised by local authorities through informers' accusation.
[140] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 182-3.

Chapter 3

Social Categorization II: Jewish Outgroups

"Synagogue of Satan" in Smyrna and Philadelphia (2:9; 3:9)

John a prophet categorizes Jews living in Smyrna and Philadelphia as another outgroup by labeling them with a derogatory title for Jews, the "synagogue of Satan" (συναγωγὴ τοῦ σατανα) in 2:9, 3:9. The two churches are highly praised for their strong faith without any blame by Jesus. I will explore the letter to the church in Smyrna first.

> [8] "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of the first and the last, who was dead and came to life: [9] "I know your affliction and your poverty, even though you are rich (οἶδά σου τὴν θλῖψιν καὶ τὴν πτωχείαν, ἀλλὰ πλούσιος εἶ,).[141] I know the slander on the part of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan (τὴν βλασφημίαν ἐκ τῶν λεγόντων Ἰουδαίους εἶναι ἑαυτοὺς καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν ἀλλὰ συναγωγὴ τοῦ σατανα). [10] Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Beware, the devil (ὁ διάβολος) is about to throw some of you into prison so that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have affliction (θλῖψιν). Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. [11] Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Whoever conquers will not be harmed by the second death.

[141] There is a textual variant here in 2:9. Five of the seven letters have τὰ ἔργα (the works). ℵ 046. 1006. 1841. 2050. 2351 added it here and KJV follows this reading. On the contrary, the three most valuable manusctipts (A C P 1611. 1854. 2053) omit this word here. It is more likely that "the works" was added in accordance with the other letters. Therefore, the omission of it is original. Eberhard Nestle et al., eds., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2013), 738.

Jesus begins with the verb οἶδά which shows that he has intimate knowledge of the condition of the church in Smyrna. Jesus knows the affliction (θλῖψιν; trouble or tribulation) and the material privation (πτωχείαν) the church faces, due to their opponents' hostility in the following sentence in 2:9b. The Lord paradoxically declares that even though they are poor in a sinful world, they are rich spiritually and eternally.[142] Another objective of the verb οἶδά is the word slander (βλασφημία).[143] The fact that Jesus makes the three words (θλῖψιν, πτωχείαν, and βλασφημία) the objectives of οἶδά shows they are connected. Their affliction and poverty derive from the slander against them by "those who say that they are Jews and are not."

The noun word βλασφημία means "speech that defames or denigrates" in the New Testament. It can be translated as reviling, denigration, disrespect, or slander.[144] It is used five times in Revelation: 2:9; 13:1, 5, 6; 17:3. On the other hand, its verb form βλασφημέω occurs four times: Rev 13:6; 16:9, 11, 21. Depending on its objective, it can be used in two meanings: (1) "slander" or "to slander" in relation to humans, (2) "blasphemy" or "to blaspheme" in relation to transcendent or associated entities.[145] According to BDAG, only Rev 2:9 is related to humans, while the rest of them are related to God and what is God's.[146]

When it is used to refer to humans, it means either "verbal slander" or denunciation of Jesus's followers before Roman authorities.[147] For example, the verb form βλασφημέω of

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[142] Fanning, *Revelation*, 127.

[143] Some versions such as CSB, ESV, NIV, NRSV and RSV translate the word βλασφημία "slander," whereas KJV, NASB and NLT translate it "blasphemy." Fanning, *Revelation*, 127.

[144] Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon,* 178.

[145] Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. "blasphemy."

[146] Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. "blasphemy." The first beast has the name of blasphemous names on its heads (13:1); the beast was given a mouth uttering blasphemous words (13:5); the beast opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God (13:6); the beast was blaspheming God's name, his dwelling, and those who dwell in heaven (13:6); they blasphemed the name of God (16:9); they blasphemed the God of heaven (16:11); they blasphemed God for the plague of the hail (16:21); a scarlet beast was full of blasphemous names (17:3).

[147] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 162.

βλασφημία appears four times in Acts (13:45, 18:6, 19:37, 26:11), and the first two of them are related to Jewish revilements toward Paul: the Jews contradicted what was spoken by Paul and blasphemed (13:45); they resisted Paul and blasphemed (18:6). In addition, Jewish believers in the late first century CE were still able to keep in touch with Jewish communities and so avoid the possible compulsion to participate in the imperial cult. The Jewish charge that Jesus's followers were not "Judeans" exempt from the religious obligation was fatal to the church.[148] For certain reasons, Jews could denunciate such believers to the local authorities anytime and anywhere. Acts 18:12-17 shows a good example of it: Jews accused Paul before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, who thought of this case as an inner problem among Jews.[149]

Besides, Jews spread false rumors about Jesus's followers so that they were accused of many kinds of criminal or antisocial behavior.[150] Such accusations certainly included derogatory and unjust charges that made the church vulnerable to economic and social opprobrium. Since Jesus's followers refused to worship the Roman gods including the divinized emperor, they were also accused of "atheism or disloyalty to Rome by Jews as well."[151] The fact that Jews persecuted Jesus's followers in various ways can be confirmed in Gospels, Acts, and the Pauline letters (Mt 5:11; 10:17-25; Mk 13:9-13; Lk 6:22; Jn 16:2; Acts 7:1-8:3; 9:1-9; 13:44-52; 14:1-7, 19; 17:5-9, 13; 21:27-36; 1 Cor 15:9; 1Thess 2:14-16; Gal 1:13-14, 23; Phil 3:6; 1Pet 4:14-16; Jam 2:7; Heb 13:13). Even in Christian apologetics, Jewish persecutions were mentioned as a major cause of the suffering of Jesus's followers.[152] Jewish denunciations of believers to the

[148] Osborne, *Revelation*, 132.
[149] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 162.
[150] Justin *1 Apol*. 26.7; *2 Apol*, 12; Athenagoras *Leg.* 3.31; Theophilus *Ad Autolycum* 3.4; Tertullian *Apol.* 4.11. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 162.
[151] Fanning, *Revelation*, 127.
[152] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 163.

local authorities could be inferred from Pliny's legal proceedings against believers at the beginning of the second century CE. Even though Pliny does not mention Jews in his letter, some Jews may have participated in the legal process.[153]

Mark Bredin's assumption is thoughtful. He insists that John's charge that they were not Jews, but the synagogue of Satan resulted from an "internal dispute" on how to live as faithful to Israelite traditions in the Roman society.[154] The synagogue saying that they were Jews maintained that they could coexist peacefully with Rome by paying the "Jewish tax"[155] which enabled them to keep their religious traditions instead of participating in the imperial cult or worshipping Roman gods. The Jews paying this tax were also guaranteed to engage in economic activity so that they could gain wealth and fame in Roman society.[156] On the other hand, for John, paying the Jewish tax would be an "act of apostasy" so he considered the synagogue to be in collusion with Rome because it was used for the rebuilding of the Temple of Capitoline Jupiter at Rome, the major center of ancient Roman religion, which was accepted as a shame by both

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[153] Duff, "The Synagogue of Satan," 167; Aune*, Revelation 1-5*, 163-64.

[154] Mark R. J. Bredin, "The Synagogue of Satan Accusation in Revelation 2:9," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 28, no. 4 (November 1998): 160.

[155] The "Jewish tax" was begun by Roman emperor Vespasian just as a result of the Jewish rebellion just after the destruction of Jerusalem's Temple. Then it was changed harshly by Domitian then the change was abolished by Nerva. During the time of the Second Temple, the Jews of the Diaspora should pay half a shekel for the yearly Temple tax by the law. After Jerusalem and its sanctuary were destructed in 70 CE, there was no need to pay this yearly Temple tax anymore because the Temple no longer existed. However, Vespasian diverted it to the Temple of Capitoline Jupiter at Rome, the major center of ancient Roman religion. This tax imposed on Jews (2 *drachmae* or 2 *denarii*) was called "Jewish tax" (*fiscus Iudaicus* or *fiscus Judaicus* in Latin). Although it enabled taxpayers not to sacrifice to Roman gods, the tax offended Jewish religious feelings. This tax was harsher than the yearly Temple tax which they had paid for Jerusalem Temple because the yearly Temple tax was paid only by adult men between the ages of 20 and 50, while the fiscus Iudaicus was imposed on all Jews regardless of their sex, age, or status. Furthermore, Domitian reinforced this Jewish tax, searching out either Gentiles who lived a Jewish life without paying this tax or those who hid their origin not to pay the tax. During Nerva's short ruling, there was some relief since one of his coins has the words "*Fisci Iudaici calumnia sublate"* (abolition of malicious prosecution). Nonetheless, the tax was still collected. L. A. Thompson, "Domitian and the Jewish Tax," *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 31, no. 3 (1982): 329–33. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4435814.

[156] According to Nelson Kraybill, Judean merchants gained wealth by selling wine, spices, perfumes, and textiles throughout the Roman Empire during Domitian's regn. Nelson J. Kraybill, *The Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse: JSNT Supplement Series* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996),132, quoted in Bredin, "The Synagogue of Satan Accusation in Revelation 2:9,"162.

faithful Jesus's followers and some faithful Jews.[157]

The Jewish tax began by Vespasian was expanded by Domitian both to two groups: (1) Jewish tax-dodgers who hid their origin and (2) non-Jewish people who practiced Judean customs. Domitian's change in tax policy would cause a "witch-hunt for Jewish tax-evaders and a spate of prosecutions of alleged evaders."[158] Bredin proposes that the two groups did not regard themselves as liable to the tax as they were not "officially practicing synagogue Judeans."[159] In such a circumstance, the church in Smyrna maintained their uncompromising attitude towards Rome, while the synagogue needed to distinguish themselves from the potential troublemakers. Therefore, the synagogue accused the churches of not being Jews in conspiracy with the local authorities. On top of that, the church's desire to make converts would be a critical threat to the neighboring synagogue. Consequently, some faithful Jews were converted, thinking of the church to be right in refusing to pay the tax for the Temple of Capitoline Jupiter since it was an act of apostasy.[160] Hemer also supposes that since many Jews were converted, the Jewish hostility toward the churches was intensified with an influx of Jewish refugees after 70 CE.[161]

This situation is matched with the following verse indicating official proceedings against the church:[162] "Do not fear what you are about to (μέλλεις) suffer. Beware, the devil (ὁ διάβολος) is about to throw (μέλλει βάλλειν) some of you into prison (εἰς φυλακὴν) so that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have affliction (θλῖψιν). Be faithful until death, and I will give

[157] Bredin, "The Synagogue of Satan Accusation in Revelation 2:9," 160.
[158] Thompson, "Domitian and the Jewish Tax," 329. Bredin, "The Synagogue of Satan Accusation in Revelation 2:9," 160.
[159] Bredin, "The Synagogue of Satan Accusation in Revelation 2:9," 160.
[160] Thompson, "Domitian and the Jewish Tax," 329. Mark R. J. Bredin, "The Synagogue of Satan Accusation in Revelation 2:9," 164.
[161] Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, 66.
[162] Fanning, *Revelation*, 128.

you the crown of life"(2:10). Their imminent (μέλλει) suffering is their imprisonment made by the devil (ὁ διάβολος), which means "adversary, slanderer." The two terms σαταν and διάβολος are synonymous and interchangeable.[163] In this sense, the imprisonment of the church in Smyrna will be done immediately by the synagogue of Satan as the agents of Satan (=the devil). Thus the "synagogue of Satan" refers to Jews who accused Jesus's followers to the local authorities.

This hostile title "synagogue of Satan" reappears in the letter to the church in Philadelphia (3:9), which receives nothing but praises from Jesus without any denunciation like the church in Smyrna:

> I know your works (οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα). Look, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name (ἐτήρησάς μου τὸν λόγον καὶ οὐκ ἠρνήσω τὸ ὄνομά μου). (Behold,) I will make those (=some) of the synagogue of Satan (ἰδοὺ διδῶ ἐκ τῆς συναγωγῆς τοῦ σατανᾶ) who say that they are Jews and are not, but are lying. (Behold,) I will make them come and bow down (ἰδοὺ ποιήσω αὐτοὺς ἵνα ἥξουσιν καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν) before your feet, and they will learn (γνῶσιν) that I have loved you (3:8-9).

The exalted Jesus knows (οἶδά) their works and situation. He praises them for their obedience and loyalty despite human weakness. The clause "you have but little power" indicates that their church or community was relatively small. According to the report of Strabo, a Greek geographer and historian, the population of Philadelphia were also small because many people lived on farms out of the city (Str-B 12.8.18; 13.4.10).[164]Accordingly, they faced a weak worldly status in the pagan environment of the city.

[163] Friesen, "Satan's Throne, Imperial Cults and the Social Settings of Revelation," 355.
[164] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 236.

In such a situation, they have kept (ἐτήρησάς, aorist) Jesus's word and have not denied (ἠρνήσω, aorist) His name in the past.[165] The word of Jesus means "his revealed truths, the gospel message" like the "word of God" in 1:2, 9, and the meaning of "not denied my name" is to acknowledge Jesus in public like the word "whoever acknowledges me" in Matt 10:33. In contrast to the majority of Sardians (3:4), the church in Philadelphia did not deny His name (3:8).[166] According to Aune, the two clauses "you have kept my word" and "you have not denied my name" mean the same concept using an "antithetical style":[167] the first is expressed positively, whereas the second is in a negative way. Therefore, their hardship resulted from their faith in Jesus Christ. Instead of giving a specific detail of the events in the past which the verse refers to, Jesus continues to speak about the synagogue of Satan.

Jesus uses ἰδοὺ (behold) two times to let the audience pay attention to the following words related to the synagogue of Satan. Jesus will make some of (ἐκ, partitive genitive) the local Jews (not all the Jews) so humble that they may come and bow down before the believers in Philadelphia. This verse alludes to Isa 60:14 or 49:23:[168] "They shall bow down before you and lick the dust of your feet"; "The descendants of those who oppressed you shall come bending low to you, and all who despised you shall bow down at your feet; they shall call you the City of the LORD, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel" (c.f. Isa 2:3; 14:2; 45:14; 49:23; Ezek 36:23; Zech 8:20-23). The Old Testament has an idea that the Gentiles will be compelled to come and show respect to the Jews at the final stage of history.[169] However, in this verse, the meaning

[165] Fanning, *Revelation*, 173-74.
[166] Osborne, *Revelation*, 189-90.
[167] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 237.
[168] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 237-238; Osborne, *Revelation*, 191.
[169] Osborne, *Revelation*, 191.

changes completely. Instead of the Gentiles, some of the Jews belonging to the synagogue of Satan will come and bow to show respect to Jesus's believers in Philadelphia. By modifying the OT's promise, John encourages the saints in Philadelphia suffering from the Jews, the synagogue of Satan.[170] It should be noted that John is not trying to say about the eschatological conversion of all the Jews presented in Rom 11:25-32.[171] The humble action of some Jews concerns the church in Philadelphia in John's time.

Finally, Jesus will make some local Jews acknowledge that he (Jesus) loved (ἠγάπησα) them. The aorist verb ἠγάπησα in the middle of future tense corresponds to the two aorist verbs ἐτήρησάς (have kept) and οὐκ ἠρνήσω (have not denied) in the previous verse (3:8). The gospel they have kept and the name they have not denied seems to have been all about Christology, that is, Christological confessions and teachings since the symbolical action of denying Jesus's name involves the denial of the Christian faith (c.f. Luke 12:9-10; Matt 10:33; 2Tim 2:12; *Mart. Pol.* 9:2-3; Justin *1Apol*. 31.6).[172] The clause "they will learn (γνῶσιν) that I have loved you" means that finally, they will come to acknowledge that the believers had the right faith and confession in the past. It can be inferred that the critical problem between the believers and the synagogue of Satan was closely related to the faith in Jesus Christ.

There is an important thing to pay attention to. Based on Jesus's expression "those who say that they are Jews and are not," the term "Jews" (Ἰουδαίους) is used positively.[173] Although John wrote Revelation in Asia Minor, he, drawing on Jewish traditions, reinterprets Jerusalem.

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[170] Osborne, *Revelation*, 191.
[171] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 238.
[172] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 237.
[173] Some scholars have assumed that the phrase "synagogue of Satan" in 2:9 and 3:9 has anti-Semitic connotations. However, it is apparent that the word "Jew" is used positively. Peder Borgen, "Polemic in the Book of Revelation," 261.

Jerusalem the Holy City, playing a key role, is coming down from heaven regardless of the interpretations of it as a symbolic or concrete place. Jerusalem whose gates are inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel (Rev 21:14) is the bride of the Lamb from every nation and people without any distinction between Jews and Gentiles.[174] Likewise, throughout Revelation, John reinterprets the concept of God's people consisting of all the believing people from every nation (Rev 1:5-6; 5:9-10; 7:14).[175]

For John, the synagogue is Jews outwardly and ethnically, but they are not true Jews inwardly due to their rejection of Jesus as their Savior. The true people of God are a spiritual nation consisting of believing Jews and Gentiles, not an ethnic group. They are also united with God's enemy, Satan (=the Devil) in their opposition to the gospel.[176] In this regard, John certainly considers himself and his churches as true Jews inwardly because of their faith in Jesus.[177] They refused to pay the Jewish tax which was used for the main pagan temple in Rome. Instead, there was a possibility that daily harassment or blackmail from the Jews caused John's churches to return to Judaism to avoid the Jewish threat. Accordingly, John needed to encourage his people to hold tight to their right faith in Jesus Christ by intentionally stigmatizing Jewish outgroups with the extreme negative phrase "synagogue of Satan."

The Relation between the "Synagogue of Satan" and Other Opponents

I have already explored the identity of the synagogue of Satan and identified them with the

[174] Borgen shows many other Jewish traditions which John relys on. Peder Borgen, "Polemic in the Book of Revelation," 262-69.
[175] Peder Borgen, "Polemic in the Book of Revelation," 269-74.
[176] Fanning, *Revelation*, 174; Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*", 67; R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920), 1.57.
[177] Aune*, Revelation 1-5*, 162.

local Jews. Nevertheless, since the relation between the "synagogue of Satan" and John's opponents in other letters has been controversial, it will be very helpful to review this controversy.

Throughout the twentieth century, many scholars assumed that they were the local Jewish community that had hostility toward the church and participated in localized outbreaks of persecution due to the church members' refusal to take part in the imperial cult.[178] These theories rely on the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* to show that the Jews actively participated in Roman persecution so that the Jews of Smyrna played a key role in putting Polycarp the Smyrnaean bishop to death.[179] Furthermore, some scholars surmised that the Jews aggressively oppressed the churches without any government assistance.[180] For example, Fiorenza insists that the Jews were eager to eliminate "trouble makers" like Jesus's followers so that the synagogues should not be targeted by Roman authorities.[181] Though the theory of full-scale Roman persecution at John's time has not been supported recently, the concept of Jewish cooperation in Roman persecution still prevails. However, it has been slightly modified as follows: the Jews participated in localized and sporadic harassments and persecutions.

Since the late 1960s, some scholars have proposed that the "synagogue of Satan" was Judaizing gentiles who promoted Jewish practices in the churches not out of the churches. This idea depends on Ignatius' letter to the Philadelphians: "If anyone interprets Judaism to you do not listen to him; for it is better to hear Christianity from the circumcised than Judaism from the

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[178] E.g., R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920), 1.58; Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 162-63; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 240-41.
[179] Duff, "The Synagogue of Satan," 149.
[180] E.g., G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 35; Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of John: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indices* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 31, quoted in Duff, "The Synagogue of Satan," 149.
[181] Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation*, 194-95.

uncircumcised."[182] The scholars indicate that the uncircumcised promoting Judaism are "those who say that they are Jews and are not but are a synagogue of Satan." They also regard these Judaizing gentiles as "Balaam," "Jezebel," and the Nicolaitans who appear in the other letters.[183]

However, as Paul Duff points out, the synagogue of Satan is distinguished from the rivals in other letters in two ways. First, the structure of the letters shows that they are different. Five letters to Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea which mention the heretic ingroups called the Nicolaitans or "Jezebel" include a call for repentance and a threat from Jesus, while two letters to Smyrna and Philadelphia do not. The lack of a call for repentance in the letters to Smyrna and Philadelphia indicates that the two churches did not undergo the threat from the Nicolaitans or "Jezebel" found in other churches.[184] For example, Jesus asked "Jezebel" and her followers to repent in the letter to Thyatira (2:21-22):

> [21] I gave (ἔδωκα) her time to repent (ἵνα μετανοήσῃ), but she refuses to repent of her fornication (οὐ θέλει μετανοῆσαι ἐκ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς). [22] Beware, I am throwing her on a bed, and those who commit adultery with her (τοὺς μοιχεύοντας μετ᾽ αὐτῆς) I am throwing into great distress, unless they repent (ἐὰν μὴ μετανοήσωσιν) of her doings; and I will strike her children dead (ἀποκτενῶ ἐν θανάτῳ).

Even though Jesus gave (ἔδωκα) her a chance to repent in the past, "Jezebel" refuses to do so. For this reason, Jesus will make her sick to death. Her followers who commit adultery with her still have a chance to repent in the conditional clause (ἐὰν μὴ μετανοήσωσιν). If not, Jesus will also kill them too. Although Jesus just says that he will throw her on a bed, it means that her illness

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[182] Duff, "The Synagogue of Satan," 152.
[183] This theory is supported by Barclay Newman, Helmut Koester, C. K. Barrett, John Gager, Lloyd Gaston, Stephen Wilson, J. Ramsey Michaels, Heinrich Kraft, John W. Marshall, and David Frankfurter. Duff, "The Synagogue of Satan," 151-54.
[184] Duff, "The Synagogue of Satan," 155-57.

will result in her death. The reason is that it is impossible that the punishment of the heretic leader "Jezebel" is less than that of her followers.[185] Such demands for repentance never appear in the two letters to Smyrna and Philadelphia where the Jews are mentioned. That is why those called a synagogue of Satan and the Nicolaitan and "Jezebel" are different groups.

Second, the fate of the people of the synagogue of Satan is contrasting to that of "Jezebel" and her group.[186] If we assume that they are identical and consider the death penalty on the woman leader "Jezebel" and her followers, we can expect the death or destruction of the synagogue of Satan as well. However, the text is not what we expect:

> I will make those (=some) of the synagogue of Satan (διδῶ ἐκ τῆς συναγωγῆς τοῦ σατανᾶ) who say that they are Jews and are not, but are lying. I will make them come and bow down (ποιήσω αὐτοὺς ἵνα ἥξουσιν καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν) before your feet, and they will learn (γνῶσιν) that I have loved you (3:9).

By contrast with the fate of John's female opponent and her group, the eschatological fate of the synagogue of Satan is very beneficent. Jesus will make them so humble that they may know that Jesus has loved the church in Philadelphia. The text says no more detail of their fate, but we can easily assume that their humble action (their coming and bowing down before Jesus's followers) is connected to the possibility that they can repent and be saved in the eschaton.,[187] Likewise, the fates of the two groups are distinct.

I agree with Duff's first convincing explanation in terms of letter structure so that I consider

[185] Duff, "The Synagogue of Satan," 157.
[186] Duff, "The Synagogue of Satan," 157-59.
[187] Duff, "The Synagogue of Satan," 157.

"those who say that they are Jews and are not" as the local Jewish people in Smyrna and Philadelphia as I explored ahead. His second assertion, however, has critical problems because their action of coming and bowing down does not refer to the eschatological fate of all the Jews.[188] Their humble action is made by some local Jews, and it is only related to the church in Philadelphia at that time not the fate of all the Jews in the last time. In Jesus's saying "I will make some of the synagogue of Satan," the verb διδῶ has a partitive genitive ἐκ as its object, meaning "some of the synagogue" at John's time not all the Jews.[189] Jesus will make them (=some local Jews) come and bow down before the church members in Philadelphia not before all the Christians at the last time. For this reason, their humble action is limited in terms of time and space so that we have to be careful not to jump to a conclusion that John describes the fate of the synagogue of Satan as benign. John still calls the local Jews a "synagogue of Satan" and distinguishes all the local Jews from some of them with ἐκ.

Though Duff is right in making a distinction between the synagogue of Satan and adversaries in other letters, his further argumentation goes wrong due to his assumption that John has a sympathetic attitude toward the fate of the synagogue of Satan.[190] According to him, John exaggerates the threat of the local Jews with the most hostile designation "synagogue of Satan" to resort to the strategy of "crisis mongering" even though there is no clear evidence of the local Jews' participation in local persecutions in the letters to Smyrna and Philadelphia. As John rhetorically creates a crisis between his ingroup and the local Jews, he tries to keep his members

[188] Many scholars have interpreted it as the final conversion of Israel presented in Rom 11:25-32. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 238.
[189] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 238.
[190] Duff mentions another example of John's positive attitude toward the Jews. He thinks of the first repentance in 13:19 as the repentance of the Jews in Jerusalem literally. Duff, "The Synagogue of Satan," 162.

from defecting from the churches to the Jews called a synagogue of Satan in the struggle against "Jezebel" and her followers for the leadership.[191] In short, Duff's sympathetic interpretation of John's attitude toward the Jews causes him to fail to take seriously the meaning of the word "slander" from the synagogue of Satan in 2:9 and the following expected sufferings in 2:10.

Now, it is apparent that "those who say that they are Jews and are not" are a local outgroup consisting of Jews independent from the adversaries in other letters. Accordingly, verbal "slander" (βλασφημία) in 2:9 referring to malicious accusations against John's groups in Smyrna comes from the local Jews neighboring the church.

[191] Duff, "The Synagogue of Satan," 164-68.

Chapter 4

Social Categorization III: Hellenistic Gnostic Outgroups

The "Works of the Nicolaitans" in Ephesus (2:6)

Other distinctive outgroups were Hellenistic in the letters. They appear only in the letters to the churches in Ephesus, Pergamum, and Thyatira. By contrast, these Hellenistic Gnostic groups do not appear in the letters to the saints in Smyrna and Philadelphia who suffered from the Jewish threats. Thus, the Jewish outgroups and the Hellenistic outgroups were mutually exclusive. John stigmatizes the Hellenistic teachers and the followers with notorious heretic figures as well as the word Satan. Now, we will explore the identity of John's third group. Jesus says to the Ephesian church:

> [2] "I know your works (τὰ ἔργα σου, plural), your toil and patient endurance (τὸν κόπον καὶ τὴν ὑπομονήν σου). I know that you cannot tolerate (δύνῃ) evildoers (κακούς); you have tested (ἐπείρασας) those who claim to be apostles (ἀποστόλους) but are not (τοὺς λέγοντας ἑαυτοὺς ἀποστόλους καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν), and have found (εὗρες) them to be false. [3] I also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary. [4] But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. [5] Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. [6] Yet this is to your credit: you hate (μισεῖς) the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate (μισῶ).

Jesus, having a transcendental knowledge of this church's condition, praised them for

their works. Their toil and patience are subordinated to the plural word ἔργα (works) because the two words and ἔργα are respectively modified by the possessive pronoun σου (your). Accordingly, κόπον, "toil," and ὑπομονήν, "patience," are two aspects of the plural noun ἔργα[192] so that it would be a better translation, "I know your works, namely, your toil and patient endurance." Continuously, Jesus acknowledges that they did not allow some evil or harmful people (κακούς) to destroy their church. Specifically, Jesus commends them for having "tested (ἐπείρασας, aorist) those who claim to be apostles[193] but are not" and having "found (εὗρες, aorist) them to be false" in the past. Those who claim to be apostles want to pass themselves off as "itinerant but authoritative Christian teachers or missionaries." This sense of apostle can be found in 2 Cor 8:23 and Phil 2:25. [194] Surely, they did not claim the prominent status of the established Twelve Apostles (Rev 21:14) or Paul.[195] The expression "who call themselves apostle" indicates that they are not legitimate apostles just as people "say that they are Jews" in 2:9; 3:9 and Jezebel "calls herself a prophetess in 2:20."[196] It was very common from the beginning of Christian history that teachers and prophets traveled from church to church, teaching false doctrine (cf. 2 Cor 11:13-15; 1 Tess 5:20-21; 1 John 4:1-3). In Acts 20:28-32, Paul also cautioned the elders of the church in Ephesus against false teachers like "savage wolves" from outside.[197] Besides, Ignatius of Antioch warned Jesus's followers in Ephesus about the danger of traveling false teachers (Eph. 7:1;

[192] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 143.
[193] The Tübingen school insisted that the false apostles in Rev 2:2 were supporters of Paul. However, there is not evidence of it. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 144.
[194] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 144-45.
[195] Fanning, *Revelation*, 145,
[196] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 145.
[197] Fanning, *Revelation*, 117.

9:1).[198]

The church tested (ἐπείρασας) them and found (εὗρες) them to be false. *Did* 11-13 deals with the problem of itinerant apostles and teachers, and how to test them. Especially, v 2 reflects several features of *Did* 12:1: "Let everyone who comes in the name of the Lord be received, but when you have tested him, you shall know him and you will have an understanding of the right [true] and the left [false]."[199]

After Jesus reiterates their commendable "endurance," "toleration," and "toil" which appear in verse 2, He starts to rebuke the church members for having abandoned their first love.[200] While they made every effort to fight against false teachers for the sake of Jesus, they "abandoned" (CSB, ESV, RSV) or "forsaken" (NIV) their sincere love for Jesus Christ. In other words, they succeeded in expelling the wandering false teachers diligently, but they became cold-hearted.[201] Jesus calls upon them to remember (μνημόνευε), repent (μετανόησον) and restore (ποίησον) their first love.

Suddenly, Jesus praises the church for "hating (μισεῖς, present) the works of the Nicolaitans, which He also hate (μισῶ, present)." Since the adversative conjunction ἀλλὰ shows that a new thought begins, it is suggested that the false apostles in v2 are different from the Nicolaitans here. Besides, the fact that the aorist tense (ἐπείρασας and εὗρες) is used in v 2 while the present tense (μισεῖς and μισω) used here supports this distinction between these two groups.[202]The Nicolaitans seem to be another itinerant outgroup, similar

[198] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 147.
[199] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 145.
[200] Fanning, *Revelation*, 117.
[201] Fanning, *Revelation*, 118.
[202] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 147-48.

to the traveling false teachers in v 2, trying to gain followers from the church in Ephesus because there is no evidence of any internal division in the church.[203] Jesus says, "you (not some of you) hate the works of the Nicolaitans." Since there is no follower of the Nicolaitans inside the church yet, Jesus's request for repentance is not related to the Nicolaitans but lack of the first love in v 5. Even though the church faced the threat from the traveling outgroup of the Nicolaitans, they all hated and refused their behavior (works) to the extent that Jesus praises them. Both these itinerant false "apostles" and the Nicolaitans failed to gain a foothold in the church in Ephesus.[204]

Some people have thought of the Nicolaitans as a symbolic title rather than a historical one because apocalyptic literature tends to use symbolic names. Although it is true, we can see an actual name "Antipas" in 2:13.[205] The name of the Nicolaitans is also actual because they just appear only in Revelation. There is no reason to use this unknown name symbolically unlike the notorious symbolic names "Balaam" and "Jezebel" which come from the Jewish Scripture.[206] The Nicolaitans means a group of the followers of "Nicolaus," who appears to be one of the seven deacons in Acts 6:5. Since he appears once in Acts, we can get just a little information about him: (1) Nicolaus was a Gentile. (2) He was a native of Antioch. (3) He was a convert to Judaism. (4) As the last of the seven to be listed, his status may have been relatively low.[207]

Several church fathers mentioned the Nicolaitans. In *Adv. haer*. 1.26.3, Irenaeus

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[203] Friesen, "Satan's Throne, Imperial Cults and the Social Settings of Revelation," 354.
[204] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 145.
[205] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 147-48.
[206] Carter, "Accommodating 'Jezebel' and Withdrawing John: Negotiating Empire in Revelation Then and Now," *Interpretation.* 63, no. 1 (2009): 33.
[207] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 149.

directly connected the founder of the group to Nicolaus, one of the seven Hellenistic leaders chosen in Acts 6:5.

> The Nicolaitanes are the followers of that Nicolas who was one of the seven first ordained to the diaconate by the apostles. They lead lives of unrestrained indulgence. The character of these men is very plainly pointed out in the Apocalypse of John, [when they are represented] as teaching that it is a matter of indifference to practice adultery, and to eat things sacrificed to idols.

He, however, failed to show evidence outside of Revelation. Hippolytus and Epiphanius, following Ireneaus' assertation, ascribed all of the Gnostic practices back to Nicolaus. For this reason, we can not conclude that there is a direct relation between Nicolaus in Acts and the Nicolaitans in Revelation.[208] Nevertheless, Nicolaus is quite related to Gnosticism as gnostics may have appealed to him as others appealed to other famous disciples such as James or Philip.[209] This itinerant outgroup of the Nicolaitans reappears as a more threatening group in the letter to the church in Pergamum. The "works of the Nicolaitans" which the church and Jesus hate at the same time will be more explored in the next section.

The "Teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans" in Pergamum (2:14-15)

The letter to the saints in Pergamum sheds light on what the teaching of the Nicolaitans is. Like the church in Ephesus, this church receives both approval and disapproval from the risen Jesus. To be accurate, Jesus's rebuke forms a greater proportion than His praise.

[14] But I have a few things (ὀλίγα) against you: you have some there who hold to the

[208] Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism: Traditions and Literature*, 36-37.
[209] Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature & History of Gnosticism*, 305.

teaching of Balaam (κρατοῦντας τὴν διδαχὴν Βαλαάμ), who taught Balak to put a stumbling block (σκάνδαλον) before the people of Israel, so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols and practice fornication (φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα καὶ πορνεῦσαι). [15] So (οὕτως) you also have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans (κρατοῦντας τὴν διδαχὴν τῶν Νικολαϊτῶν) [likewise] (ὁμοίως). [16] Repent then (μετανόησον οὖν). If not, I will come to you soon and make war (πολεμήσω) against them with the sword of my mouth.

As I mentioned before, this church is commended for holding fast to the name of Jesus Christ even though they are living where Satan's throne is. The church had a faithful witness, Antipas, who was killed. With the adversative conjunction ἀλλὰ, Jesus begins to reprimand them for having some who hold to the teaching of Balaam (κρατοῦντας τὴν διδαχὴν Βαλαάμ) in v 14. A small portion of the ingroup members following the false teaching exist inside the church because Jesus has "a few things (ὀλίγα) against them." John attacks the false teachers and their followers by likening their false teaching to the most dangerous teaching derived from Balaam in the Jewish Scripture. The association of adversaries with notorious figures from the past is one of the techniques used to smear them.[210] John replaces his opponents' actual names with vicious biblical names Balaam and Jezebel that are divinely condemned for participating in idolatry.[211]

Jesus explains what the teaching of Balaam is. His teaching caused the people of Israel to participate in idolatry and fornication. This verse refers to the important episode

[210] The mentions of Balaam here and Jezebel later in 2:20 are good examples of it. We can see the technique elsewhere in Jewish literature: Jannes and Jambres (4Q267 = 1QD^{a} 3 ii 14; 4Q269 = 4QD^{d} frag. 2, line 2; 6Q15 = 6QDamascus Document frag. 3, line 2; 2 Tim 3:8; *b. Menah.* 85a; cf. Pliny *Hist. nat.* 30.2.11; Apuleius *Apol*. 90; Str-B 3:660-64; McNamara, *Targum*, 90-93); Nadab and Abihu (1QM 17:2); Korah (Ps.-Philo *Bib. Ant.* 16:1-7; 57:2). Balaam is also referred to in Jude 11 and 2 Pet 2:15. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 185.

[211] Carter, "Accommodating 'Jezebel' and Withdrawing John," 33.

in Num 25 where the Israelites involved idolatry with the god Baal of Peor and Israelite men married Midianite women against God's words. As a result, in the divinely commanded war, Balaam was killed since he was responsible for "the affair of Peor" in Num 31:8, 16.[212]

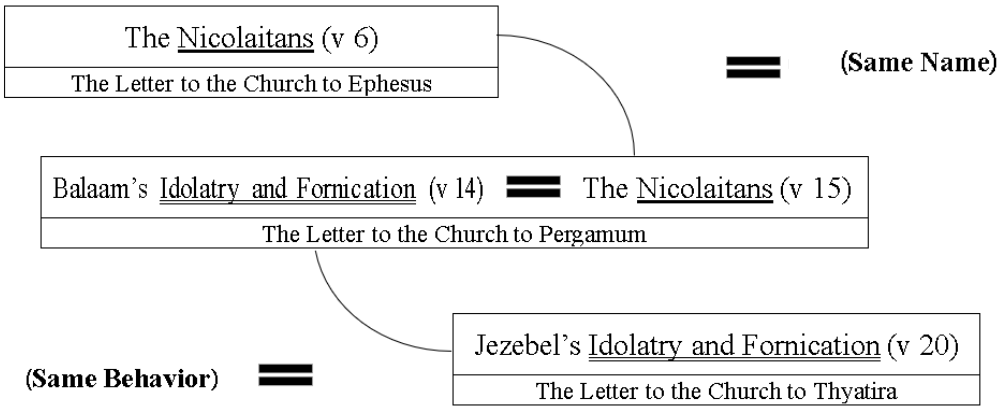
Jesus continues to scorn the church for "having some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans (κρατοῦντας τὴν διδαχὴν τῶν Νικολαϊτῶν) likewise (ὁμοίως)." The teaching of the symbolic name of Baalm lightens up the identity of the teaching of the actual name of the Nicolaitans. In v 15, the two conjunctive adverbs οὕτως (so) and ὁμοίως (likewise) prove that the two teachings are identical. In addition, the literal meaning of "Nicolaitans" ("conqueror of the people" in Greek) is similar to the meaning of "Balaam" ("ruler of the people" in Hebrew).[213] According to Warren Carter, John's rhetoric connects the three characters Nicolaitans, Balaamites, and Jezebel to each other by using the same name the Nicolaitans (2:15 and 2:6) and by linking them with the same action (eating food sacrificed to idols and practicing fornication, 2:14 and 2:20) so that they all are identified as John's adversaries.[214]

[212] Carter, "Accommodating 'Jezebel' and Withdrawing John," 33.

[213] Nicolaitans literally means "conquerors of the laity, the people" as Balaam means "ruler of the people" in Hebrew. Boring, *Revelation*, 93.

[214] Several prominent scholars such as Müller, Klauck, and Fiorenza argues that these symbolic names "Balaam" and "Jezebel" refer to the same group of male and female prophets called the Nicolaitans. Kelhoffer, "The Relevance of Revelation's Date and the Imperial Cult for John's Appraisal of the Value of Christians' Suffering in Revelation 1-3," 574; Carter, "Accommodating 'Jezebel' and Withdrawing John," 33; Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 148.

Diagram 1. John's Rhetoric to Connect His Opponents


The Nicolaitans (v 6)
The Letter to the Church to Ephesus
(Same Name)
Balaam's Idolatry and Fornication (v 14)
The Nicolaitans (v 15)
The Letter to the Church to Pergamum
Jezebel's Idolatry and Fornication (v 20)
The Letter to the Church to Thyatira
(Same Behavior)

Jesus points out that the teaching of Balaam in the remote past still has a devastating effect on John's ingroup in the form of the teaching of the Nicolaitans in John's time. Even though it is not clear what does it mean by the phrase "eating food sacrificed to idols and practicing fornication," scholars are divided into two groups: One group interprets it symbolically. It refers to taking part in the ritual banquets linked to public days and festivals or buying sacrificial meat from the marketplace to eat rather than literal participation in sacrificing and eating the meat in local Greek temples. It is because part of the flesh of victims offered to gods in temples was consumed by priests and participants, whereas the rest was sold in the market. We can see this kind of practice in the New Testament (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25; 1 Cor 8:1, 4, 7, 10; 10:19).[215] The other group understands it literally because there are many examples of meaning literally. For instance, the apostolic conference decides that believers should "abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication" (Acts

[215] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 149.

15:29).[216] Paul, mentioning the Baal Peor case in Num 25:1-18, asks his people neither to eat food sacrificed to idols nor to "commit fornication" (1 Cor 10:8). Balaam's teaching Jesus mentions is directly connected to the historical Baal Peor case of "eating food sacrificed to idols and practicing fornication" (Rev 2:14). Since false teachings bring forth false practices, we should not exclude the possibility of the literal meaning.[217]

In v 16, Jesus asks the church to immediately repent of allowing some people to follow the teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans, saying "Therefore, repent (μετανόησον οὖν)." Since the conjunctive adverb οὖν shows the logic of cause and effect, the previous verses are the cause. Consequently, their repentance is directly connected to accepting the false teaching and practice. It should be reminded that the Ephesian church is commended for rejecting the teaching of the Nicolaitans, and their repentance is only linked to their abandoned first love. By contrast, the Pergamum church is scorned for having "some" who follow the false teaching of John's opponent outgroup and is demanded to repent due to this, which means that the false teaching has permeated the Pergamum church more than the Ephesian church. For this reason, if the two churches do not repent, Jesus's response differs. Jesus will remove the Ephesian church's lampstand (2:5) while He will immediately "make war (πολεμήσω) against them with the sword of my mouth (2:16)." Jesus's punitive action to the church in Pergamum is far severer than that to the church in Ephesus since the Pergamum church's spiritual identity has been damaged.

[216] Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 63.
[217] Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 63.

That "Woman Jezebel" in Thyatira (2:20)

Like the previous letters to the churches in Ephesus and Pergamum, this letter to the Thyatira church included both Jesus's approval and disapproval. Jesus's rebuke is far heavier than that of Pergamum. The letter shows that there is an internal division within the church caused by the powerful female leader called "Jezebel" and her followers. The church members accept her teaching and participated in her practice.

> [19] "I know your works (σου τὰ ἔργα, plural) -- your love, faith, service, and patient endurance (τὴν ἀγάπην καὶ τὴν πίστιν καὶ τὴν διακονίαν καὶ τὴν ὑπομονήν σου). I know that your last works are greater than the first. [20] But (ἀλλα) I have this against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel (τὴν γυναῖκα Ἰεζάβελ), who calls herself a prophet and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice fornication (πορνεῦσαι) and to eat food sacrificed to idols (φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα). [21] I gave her time to repent (χρόνον ἵνα μετανοήσῃ), but she refuses to repent (μετανοῆσαι) of her fornication. [22] Beware, I am throwing her on a bed, and those who commit adultery with her I am throwing into great distress, unless they repent of her doings; [23] and I will strike (=kill, ἀποκτενῶ) her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am the one who searches minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve.

Jesus, having intimate knowledge of the exact condition of the church, begins to praise them for their works such as love, faith, service, and endurance. Like 2:2, since the plural noun ἔργα and the following four words are respectively modified by the possessive genitive σου, the four terms are four aspects of the ἔργα, "works."[218] After the short commendation in one verse, the mood is completely changed. With the adversative conjunction ἀλλα, Jesus begins to give them serious warnings. Jesus reprimands the Thyatira church for "tolerating that woman Jezebel,

[218] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 202.

who calls herself a prophet" (ἀφεῖς τὴν γυναῖκα Ἰεζάβελ, ἡ λέγουσα ἑαυτὴν προφῆτιν). John the author replaces the female prophet's actual name with the most wicked female character's name Jezebel. John's typical expression of "She calls herself a prophet" means that she is not a true but a false prophet.

According to John, she has corrupted a portion of his congregation in Thyatira just as Jezebel did in the Old Testament. Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal king of Tyre and Sidon, became the wife of Ahab king of the northern Kingdom of Israel (869-850 BCE). Then queen Jezebel led Ahab to institute the worship of Baal and Asherah on a national scale, resulting in corrupting Israel's faith in God in both the northern and southern kingdoms (1 Kgs 16:31; Jos. *Ant.* 8.317).[219] We can see her many wicked deeds to eradicate Israel's belief in God in 1 Kgs 18-21: 2 Kgs 9.[220] She killed a number of the faithful prophets of God (1 Kgs 18:4, 13; Jos. *Ant*. 8.330, 334; 9.108), whereas she supported 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah, who were allowed to eat at Jezebel's table (1 Kgs 18:19; Jos. Ant. 8.330, 334). She also made every effort to kill Elijah (1 Kgs 19:1-3; Jos. *Ant.* 8.347). She plotted against Naboth to be stoned to death to take his vineyard for Ahab (1 Kgs 21:1-16; Jos. Ant. 8.355-59). Finally, queen Jezebel was killed by the penalty of defenestration and then was eaten by dogs according to Elijah's prophecy (2 Kgs 9:30-37; Jos. *Ant*. 9. 122-24). Even though Jehu accused her of her "fornications and sorceries" in 2 Kgs 9:22, we cannot find any detail of them in her story so that they may be metaphors for her making God's people abandon God's worship. Queen Jezebel was also famous for her luxury makeup just before her death (2 Kgs 9:30),[221] which has been easily

[219] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 203.
[220] cf. Jos. *Ant.* 8.316-59:9,47, 108, 122-23 where Josephus rewrote her stories. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 203.
[221] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 203.

associated with fornication.

From John's perspective, just as Jezebel as a faithful supporter of Baal misled God's people into worshipping Baal, "Jezebel" in the Thyatira is "teaching and beguiling (διδάσκει καὶ πλανᾷ) the servants of Jesus Christ to practice fornication (πορνεῦσαι) and to eat food sacrificed to idols (φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα)." Her teaching and practice are identical to the teaching of Balaam (Rev 2:14) and the teaching of the Nicolaitans (2:15) because they are described in the same terms:[222] "fornication (πορνεῦσαι) and eating food sacrificed to idols (φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα)." Accordingly, it is likely that "Jezebel" and her followers were a group of Nicolaitans.[223]

Now, Jesus seriously asks "Jezebel" and her followers to repent. Particularly, Jesus gave (ἔδωκα, aorist) her time to repent, but she did not repent. It is a big difference between "Jezebel" and other adversaries including the Balaamites and the Nicolaitans in the letter to the Pergamon church, who are not given a chance to repent. Only the church is invited to repent. It suggests that "Jezebel" was a member of John's ingroup while other adversaries in Ephesus and Pergamon were itinerant outgroups of false teachers outside the church. "Jezebel" who did not repent is supposed to be sick to death on her bed without any other option.[224] However, her followers who commit adultery with her still have a chance to repent in the conditional clause (ἐὰν μὴ μετανοήσωσιν).[225] If not, Jesus will kill her children. This death punishment is far more intensified than the punishment aimed at those who do not repent in the Ephesus or Pergamon

[222] Carter, "Accommodating 'Jezebel' and Withdrawing John," 33.
[223] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 148.
[224] Some scholars do not think that "Jezebel" will face a death penalty. However, "throwing her on a bed (sickbed)" will result in her death since it is impossible that the punishment of the heretic leader "Jezebel" is less than that of her followers. Duff, "The Synagogue of Satan," 157; Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, 121-22.
[225] Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, 121.

churches.

For John, the prophetess "Jezebel" was the most dangerous and destructive opponent than other adversaries because she, inside the church, exerted a considerable influence on John's ingroup so that many of the members became "her children" by actively following the prophetess' teaching and practice. That is why John depicts "Jezebel" most negatively. The Great Whore of Babylon, with whom all the nations have fornicated (14:8; 17:2; 18:3; 19.2) evokes "Jezebel" who misleads the church members into practicing fornication in Rev 2.[226]

From a different point of view, "Jezebel" was the most competent female leader who could compete with John in the church in Thyatira, which indicates the possibility that women could

[226] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 204; Warren Carter, "Accommodating 'Jezebel' and Withdrawing John," 34-35; Many feminist scholars have criticized the Book of Revelation for depicting women characters in both negative and violent ways. Especially, the image of the Great Whore has been a target of scorn by them. Collins maintains that in Revelation John produces a set of abominating images that present "hatred and fear of women and one's own body." Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 160. Collins points out that John only sees women in terms of their relationship with men: prostitute (Rev 17), mother (Rev 12), and bride (19:9; 21:1-22:5). All these terms could not be independent of men, making men heroes. Collins, "Feminine Symbolism in the Book of Revelation," ed. Amy Jill Levine, *A Feminist Companion to the Apocalypse of John* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2009), 130. One of the representative feminist critics of Revelation is Tina Pippin. She reads Revelation through a literary reading focusing on the role of the reader, not on concerns for authors and history. Tina Pippin, *Death and Desire: The Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 27. She reads the Harlot's body as the literal rape and murder of an actual woman in Rev 17:16-17. She also literally interprets the 144,000 male virgins in 14:4 as excluding women. Pippin, *Death and Desire*, 57-68. She insists that even the Woman clothed in the sun (12:1-7) and the New Jerusalem (21:2) are all negative since they are nothing but "stereotypical objects of male desire": "The Woman Clothed with the Sun is a goddess subdued, tamed, and under control. After her reproductive activity, she is no longer useful. The traditional female values that accompany the act of mothering (nature and caretaking) are suppressed, the child is taken to live in heaven, and traditional male values of competition and separation come to the foreground. The Woman Clothed with the Sun, Jezebel, and the Whore are all hunted. Only the Woman Clothed with the Sun escapes, but her escape is banishment from the center of power. The female is decentered even when held as an ideal woman." Pippin, *Death and Desire*, 76. From their perspective, the language of Revelation is hopelessly patriarchal so that Revelation has produced the idea of women's inferiority to men. However, there are many evil male characters in Revelation: Pergamon's male false prophet, "Balaam" (Rev 2:14), the red dragon (Rev 12), and so on. Such feminist interpretations do not pay attention to what the author meant to express. Morton, *Recent Research on Revelation*, 125. The reason that John shows extreme hostility toward "Jezebel" and symbolizes her in the Great Whore of Babylon in Rev 17 is that "Jezebel" is his most competent but dangerous female rival in his ingroup.

take influential positions in both Anatolian Judaism and Christianity. Aune explains as follows:

> There are some nineteen inscriptions from 27 BCE through the sixth century CE in which women bear such titles as "head of the synagogue," "Priestess," "mother of the synagogue," "elder," and "leader." Cohen and Brooten argue convincingly that these are functional rather than honorific titles. One of the more relevant evidential inscriptions is from Sardis. In the Greco-Roman world, inscriptional evidence suggests that women frequently played the role of patronesses. In early Christianity, several women of probable Jewish origin held important offices. Junia was an apostle (Rom 16:7); Phoebe was a deacon and a "patroness" (Rom 16:1-2); Prisca was a teacher and missionary (Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Rom 16:3-4; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19).[227]

"Jezebel" was likely an influential "patroness or hostess" of one of the important house churches within the Christian community at Thyatira who opposed John's teaching and attitude toward the Roman society.[228]

Now, we have to raise important questions: What activities do these terms, "practicing fornication (πορνεῦσαι)" and "eating food sacrificed to idols (φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα)," refer to, why would a female prophet promote them in John's congregation in Thyatira, and why would her teaching be attractive to so many people of the church? We need to consider these questions before accepting John's negative judgment on her teaching and practice.[229]

The phrase "practicing fornication" can refer to sexual immorality literally in 1 Cor 6:18; 10:8. But it can be used symbolically to criticize the people of God who abandon their "covenant commitments" and take part in Gentiles' behaviors including idolatry. A good example would be Ps 106:35-36: "They (the people of Israel) mingled with the nations and learned to do as they

[227] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 203.
[228] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 203.
[229] Carter, "Accommodating 'Jezebel' and Withdrawing John," 33.

did. They served their idols." John used the same verb (ἐπόρνευσαν) three times in 17:2; 18:3, 9 to condemn Babylon (Rome) because "client-kings have participated culturally, politically, economically, and religiously in imperial culture."[230] Since it means literally or symbolically, we should be open to both possibilities.

Now, I focus on the action of "eating good sacrificed to idols." Scholars have interpreted this term in two ways. One view is that it means eating food purchased in marketplaces after being offered to various Greek gods (cf. 1 Cor 8-10). The other view sees it as eating food as a participant in the various festivals honoring deities and occasions such as weddings, birthdays, or accession. The two views are very likely and connected. Such festivals honoring gods took place in temples as well as "in other public civic spaces such as squares, theaters, stadia, gymnasia, and baths where religious images and altars could be located." "Festivals included prayers and hymns, sacrifices, games, feast, and activities which were funded and presided over by local elites, benefactors, or priests." Festivals could be followed by celebrations of the imperial cult focusing on the emperor.[231] Naturally, participants in these events would eat food offered to gods.

Such festivals and celebrations were pervasive in the cities where the churches in Rev 2-3 were located. The imperial cult, for instance, was established in Pergamum in 29 BCE (*Dio Cassius* 51.20.6-9) and Smyrna became a "center of observance" in 23-26 CE (Tacitus, *Annals* 4.15). A temple was dedicated to the Sebastoi in Ephesus in 89 or 90 CE. According to Simon Price, thirty-four cities in Asia Minor had priests of the emperor Augustus, eleven cities had priests of the emperor Tiberius, at least eighty cities had priests serving for the Sebastoi, and

[230] Carter, "Accommodating 'Jezebel' and Withdrawing John," 35.
[231] Carter, "Accommodating 'Jezebel' and Withdrawing John," 36.

thirty-five cities had people called "temple warden."[232] Festivals and celebrations for gods and emperors permeated daily life. Even though participation was not mandatory, observances were interlocked with daily political, economic, and social activities. To refuse to take part in such civic activities meant losing social and economic links.[233]

In this context, the prophetess "Jezebel" insisted that Jesus's followers could actively take part in such festivals and celebrations honoring deities not to lose their daily political, economic, and social connections. Even though John does not allow her to defend her teaching, it is not impossible to hear her voice. We can easily find similar debates about levels and methods of societal engagement in other books in the New Testament (cf. 1 Cor 8-10, Acts 15:20, and 1 Pet 2:13-17).[234]

Warren Carter tries to list some possible positive things about her teaching on the assumption that she takes care of her followers with good pastoral and theological motives:[235] (1) Survival: Since cultic activities were enmeshed in socio-economic activities, their active participation was necessary for survival. (2) Social Reputation and Evangelism: A refusal to take part in cultic activities would cause political and social resentment. This confrontation was not good for evangelism. (3) Theological Knowing: Biblical traditions affirm that there is only one God, and other idols are lifeless, powerless objects made by human hands (Jer 10:1-10; 51:17-19; Isa 41:24, 29; 42:17; 44:9-20; Hab 2:18-20; Wis Sol 13:10-15:17; 1 Cor 8:4; Acts 19:21-41). For "Jezebel," all the idols, images, and rituals were not dangerous to Jesus's followers because

[232] S.R.F.Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 58, 66-67, quoted in Carter, "Accommodating 'Jezebel' and Withdrawing John," 36.
[233] Carter, "Accommodating 'Jezebel' and Withdrawing John," 36.
[234] Carter, "Accommodating 'Jezebel' and Withdrawing John," 37.
[235] Carter, "Accommodating 'Jezebel' and Withdrawing John," 37-39.

they did not influence them. (4) Biblical Examples of Blessed Imperial Participation: Just as Joseph and Daniel rose to power in Egypt and Babylon thanks to God's grace, Jesus's followers had to engage in social activities. (5) Recent Events: After the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by Rome, the Roman Empire began to be considered to be chosen by God. So, cultural participation in the benefits that the empire offers could be God's blessing.

It is inferred that the prophetess' possible pastoral and theological argumentations were so attractive that many of the members of John's ingroup would be willing to accept her teaching. In response, John opposed her active cultural participation, arguing for "cultural distance and withdrawal" from the pervasive imperial society.[236] For John, she was more dangerous than any other adversary from outgroups so that he depicts her "accommodating"[237] teaching and attitude as symbolical actions of "practicing fornication (πορνεῦσαι)" and "eating food sacrificed to idols (φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα). At last, John stigmatizes her as "Jezebel" through the mouth of Jesus and declares the death penalty to her and her followers in the ingroup.

The "Depths of Satan" in Thyatira (2:24)

We have seen the possibility that "Jezebel" taught the church members out of good faith and with pastoral and theological concerns. Accordingly, it is also possible that since the female prophet "Jezebel" was John's powerful rival in the Thyatira church, he tried to denounce her scathingly by exaggerating her downsides. Jesus, however, reveals that "Jezebel's" teaching has

[236] Carter, "Accommodating 'Jezebel' and Withdrawing John," 39.
[237] Warren Carter compares these two positions with Richard Niebuhr's famous paradigm. The position of "Jezebel" belongs to "Christ embracing culture," whereas that of John belongs to "Christ against culture." Carter, "Accommodating 'Jezebel' and Withdrawing John," 46.

a critical issue. Her teaching is not based on God's word but from Satan (2:24):

> But to the rest of you in Thyatira (τοῖς λοιποῖς τοῖς ἐν Θυατείροις), who do not hold this teaching (τὴν διδαχὴν ταύτην), who have not learned 'the deep things of Satan' (τὰ βαθέα τοῦ σατανᾶ) as they say (ὡς λέγουσιν), to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden;

Although many of the members of the Thyatira church became "Jezebel's" children by accepting and following her accommodating teaching, the rest of them reject her teaching and have not learned the "deep things of Satan as they say" (τὰ βαθέα τοῦ σατανα ὡς λέγουσιν). We can get the exact meaning of "deep things of Satan" when we understand who says this. This is important because this case is totally different from John's typical expressions we have seen before: "those who claim to be 'apostles'" (τοὺς λέγοντας ἑαυτοὺς ἀποστόλους, 2:2); "those who say that they are 'Jews'" (τῶν λεγόντων Ἰουδαίους εἶναι ἑαυτοὺς, 2:9); "that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a 'prophet'" (τὴν γυναῖκα Ἰεζάβελ, ἡ λέγουσα ἑαυτὴν προφῆτιν, 2:20); "some of the "synagogue of Satan" who say that they are 'Jews'" (ἐκ τῆς συναγωγῆς τοῦ σατανᾶ τῶν λεγόντων ἑαυτοὺς Ἰουδαίους εἶναι, 3:9). All these positive titles that they claim to be are called by John's opponents not by John so that they mean just the opposites. Rather, John adds "not" (οὐ, negative adverb), "false," or "Satan" to the titles. This is John's typical rhetoric to attack his adversaries.[238]

The "deep things of Satan," however, is said not by John. Who is the subject in the subordinate clause "as they say" (ὡς λέγουσιν, present active 3rd plural)? If the subject of ὡς λέγουσιν is the rest of the faithful Thyatiran believers, they label "Jezebel's" teaching with the

[238] Some scholars have insisted that John the author intentionally changed the "deep things of God" into the "deep things of Satan" like the "synagogue of Satan." Fanning, *Revelation*, 154.

extreme negative word "Satan." On the other hand, if the subject is Jezebel's followers, it referred to something related to the worship of Satan literally.[239] Considering the context and grammar, the latter is more persuasive.

According to BDAG, βαθύς refers to something "nonphysical perceived to be so remote that it is difficult to assess" in Rev 2:24.[240] It seems that "Jezebel" and her followers claim that they have secret knowledge of Satan exclusively. It should be reminded that the term "Satan" here is not said by John but by "Jezebel's" own group.

Such an idea of having exclusive knowledge of Satan is found among certain Gnostic teachers.[241] David Aune suggests that the expression "depths of Satan" has begun as a "Gnostic motto," although the Gnostics did not monopolize the word "βάθος." It is also used in the Old and New Testaments (Dan 2:22; Rom 11:33). Especially, the phrase the "depths of God" (τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ) appears in 1 Corinthian 2:10. On the other hand, many church fathers who fought against Gnostics in the second-third century often mentioned the term "depths" used in the Gnostic system.[242] However, it is not clear that there were groups claiming to have the secret knowledge of Satan inside churches at the end of the first century. For this reason, some scholars have thought that "Jezebel" and her followers originally claimed that they had the deep knowledge of "God," but John intentionally changed it into "Satan" regardless of the

[239] Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 265.

[240] Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon,* s.v. "βαθύς.".

[241] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 207.

[242] Irenaeus said, "They claim that they have found out the mysteries of Bythus" in *Adv. haer.* 2.22.1. Hippolytus also said, "They call themselves Gnostics, claiming that they alone know the depths (ta. ba,qh)" in *Ref*. 5.6.4. He stated that the Valentinians called the Father "Root and Deep and Depth" in Ref. 6.30.7). Clement of Alexandria spoke of "the depths of knowledge" in *Strom*. 5.88.5). Aune*, Revelation 1-5*, 208; In fact, in some Gnostic systems including Valentinianism, the Supreme Being is called the Monad, the One, the primal Depth (Bythus), or the primal Father (cf. *Acts Thom.* 143). Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 207-8; Thus, God can be defined as βάθος or Depth in a Gnostic context. Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 320.

grammar.[243]

Even though there is insufficient information, many modern scholars have noted that "Jezebel's" claim and teaching reflect some pre-Gnostic features.[244] First of all, they ("Jezebel" and her followers) boasted of secret knowledge (gnosis) of the "deep things of Satan" to which they have exclusive access. It means that all evil should be experienced by believers to demonstrate their superiority over it.[245] They also claim to have exclusive access to the gnosis. This sense of spiritual superiority was so attractive to the church members that it caused a critical split into two groups inside the church: those who had it and those who did not have it. Naturally, those who had it looked down on the opposite. The rest of the church Jesus praised were those who did not have the secret knowledge (2:24).

This secret knowledge enables people to be freed from the world and its powers and guarantees their final salvation since their soul is not affected but secure. This Gnostic freedom can be shown in "strict asceticism" or "great moral libertinism."[246] According to the church fathers, "the libertine direction of Gnosticism expressed its higher knowledge mainly in practicing immorality and in the eating of food sacrificed to idols."[247] This freedom they have already obtained allows them to live in peaceful co-existence with the Roman pagan society without giving up faith in God and Jesus Christ. Consequently, this Gnostic freedom obtained by

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[243] Fannining, *Revelation*, 154; Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, 122.

[244] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 148; Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 62-63, 76-77; C.K. Barrett, "Gnosis and the Apocalypse of John," *The New Testament and Gnosis*, ed. Alastair Logan and Alexander J. M. Wedderburn (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 125.

[245] Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, 122.

[246] These are two ways for Gnostics to escape the traps that the powers (archons) had set up for human beings in the Law. Perkins, *Gnosticism and the New Testament*, 145-6.

[247] Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation*, 117: Rudolph points out that accusations for libertine sexual ethic were made by patristic writers to attack and distort Gnostic teachings. Kurt Rudolph, "Gnosticism," *ABD* 2:1034, quoted in Fanning, *Revelation*, 154.

the gnosis may have provided Jezebel and the Nicolaitans with the justification for an ethical license.[248]

The most important feature of the Gnostic teachings is the concept of salvation that knowing is directly linked to salvation. In other words, once one possesses the mystic knowledge, one can be saved spiritually at once. The spiritual salvation and the negative attitude toward the body and the law led to "libertinism" and "antinomianism" which John attacked.[249] Such a soteriology focusing on spiritual salvation could not help but emphasize a "realized eschatology."

According to Boring, the Nicolaitans also advocated a "realized eschatology" which declared that Christians had already experienced spiritual salvation through "the deep knowledge of God" and taken part in the new age because they were "released from the constraints of life in the old aeon." For them, the kingdom of God had already been realized but was not what will be complete in the future.[250]

Such a "realized eschatology" does not need physical resurrection. It can be well understood in light of conflicts between Thomas' and John's communities. According to Gregory Riley, the Gospel of John was written to correct Gnostic spiritual resurrection derived from "realized eschatology"[251] which Thomas' community had. The evangelist of the Fourth Gospel wrote his gospel to create a tension between present and future, between "spiritual" and

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[248] Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation*, 117.

[249] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 314.

[250] To explain the realized eschatology, Boring mentions the case of the church in Laodicea: "The 'riches' of which the Laodicean church boasted were probably not only or even primarily material riches but the spiritual riches enjoyed by Christians who supposed they were already living in the fulfilled time of prophetic phenomena and spiritual bliss (cf. I Cor 1:5-7, and 4:8 for Paul's sarcastic response to another church which had this view of the richness of its own spiritual life)." Boring, *Revelation*, 94.

[251] The *Gospel of Thomas* asserts the spiritually realized eschatology: "His disciples said to him: When will the Repose of the dead occur? And when will the new cosmos come? He said to them: This thing which you expect has come, but you do not recognize" (*GTh* 51).

"physical" resurrections by emphasizing "physical resurrection" in the Lazarus story (John 11:23-27) and the Doubting Thomas periscope.[252]

Likewise, the Book of Revelation was written to correct Gnostic spiritual realized eschatology which the Nicolaitans had, by presenting a well-balanced theology between "realized eschatology" and "futuristic eschatology." Fiorenza offers a good explanation of it.

> The author insists that the "Lord" of the world is not the emperor but Jesus who has created an alternative reign and community to that of the Roman empire. Yet over and against a "realized eschatology," Revelation maintains the early Christian apocalyptic emphasis on the "not yet" of salvation. In redemption, the community of Jesus is gathered and constituted as the domain of God's reign on earth in the end time. Yet salvation is only possible after all dehumanizing powers are overcome and a "new heaven and a new earth" has come into being because salvation means not only the salvation of the soul but the whole person.[253]

In Rev 4-5, the glory of God and the triumph of the Lamb have been already realized in heaven but have not yet been accomplished on earth. Jesus's resurrection is the pledge of God's cosmic victory over evil (19-20), and finally, the kingdom of God will be accomplished in the future (21-22). The tension between "already" and "not yet" is the most key factor in Christian eschatology.[254] Therefore, John's attempt to highlight the "not yet" to strike a balance between realized and futuristic eschatology could be strong evidence of the Nicolaitans' realized eschatology.

These concepts of "realized eschatology" and "spiritual salvation" would form the basis of "Jezebel's" accommodating teaching and attitude, making her followers participate in cultic

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[252] Gregory J. Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 127-133.
[253] Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation,* 4.
[254] Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation,* 3-4.

activities without any hesitation. From John's point of view, "Jezebel's" cultural participation in cultic activities was not based on God's word but a secret knowledge of the demonic-satanic realm.[255]

[255] John Christopher Thomas & Frank D. Macchia. *Revelation: The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 109; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 265.

Chapter 5

Analysis of the Intergroup and Intragroup Conflicts between John's Ingroups and His Outgroups

Now, we can see the whole picture of the intergroup and intragroup conflicts[256] between John's ingroups and his outgroups after we have explored the letters to the churches which reflect any conflict. As we have examined, each church had its own situation different from other churches. Their spiritual conditions all differ, and the degrees of permeation of the adversary outgroups are different as well. Accordingly, Jesus's praises and denunciations differ. The following tables 2 and 3 help us understand the conditions of each church in the letter part (Rev 2-3).

Table 2. Praise and Disapproval for the Assemblies[257]

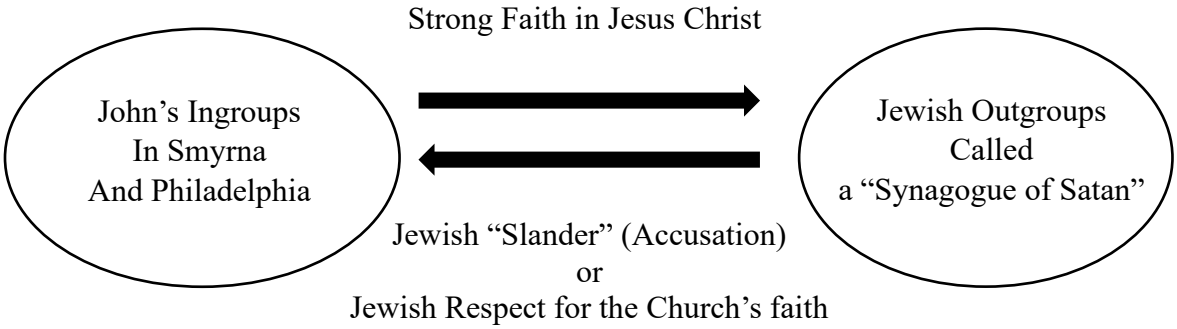
	No disapproval	Moderate disapproval of some	Moderate disapproval of many	Strong disapproval of some	Strong disapproval of many
No praise	—	—	—	—	Laodicea
Moderate Praise for some	—	—	—	—	Sardis
Moderate Praise for many	—	—	_	—	—
Strong praise for some	—	—	—	—	—
Strong Praise for many	Smyrna Philadelphia	—	Ephesus	Pergamum Thyatira	—

[256] Intergoup conflicts refer to conflicts between groups, while intragroup conflicts refer to conflicts in one group. So, they are distinguishable.

[257] Friesen, "Satan's Throne, Imperial Cults and the Social Settings of Revelation," 355.

Using diagrams of intergroup relations, I will analyze the condition of each church. The churches in Smyrna and Philadelphia interacted with the Jewish society as outgroups.

Diagram 2. The Intergroup Conflicts in the Churches in Smyrna and Philadelphia
(The churches have a strong social identity so that the ingroup boundaries are hard to be permeated.)



Only these two churches receive strong praises for all the church member's faithful beliefs without any disapproval from Jesus (see table 2). Consequently, there is no request to repent at all. Intriguingly, only these two faithful churches were experiencing intergroup conflicts with Jewish outgroups, even though there were Jewish communities in the area where the other five churches were located.[258] The church in Smyrna has suffered from tribulation and poverty (2:9) and expects to suffer affliction by the "slander" of some of the Jewish society, due to their strong faith in Jesus Christ (2:10). The church in Philadelphia has kept Jesus Christ's word even though they have a little power (3:8). Some of the Jews will come to acknowledge that the church's faith is true (3:9). It is inferred that their strong faith in Jesus Christ seemed to be both something offensive and something attractive to the Jewish outgroup.

[258] Many inscriptions show there were several dozen flourishing synagogues in the Roman province of Asia. P.W. van der Horst suggested that it may have been roughly one million by the first century CE. Acts mentions four synagogues in Pisidian Antioch (13:14), Iconium (14:1), Philippi (16:13), and Ephesus (18:19, 26; 19:8). The synagogue at Sardis was the largest ancient synagogue consisting of very wealthy and influential Jews. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 168-72.

Some faithful Jews would consider paying the Jewish tax which was used for the main pagan temple in Rome to be an act of apostasy. In their eyes, the churches were right in refusing to pay the tax and take part in the Roman cultic culture, even though they faced poverty derived from the disconnection with the Roman political and economic system related to the pervasive cultic culture. The two churches kept their ingroup prototypes and norms by keeping Jesus's word and name. From the perspective of social identity theory, those who feel lower status in their ingroup tend to disidentify themselves from their group and move to other groups whose members hold fast to ingroup prototypes and norms.[259] Such social mobility happens from groups where members feel lower status to groups where they feel dignity and value.[260] Therefore, the churches' strong Christological confession (ingroup norms) would be attractive to some true Jews who felt guilty of the act of apostasy (cf. Rev 3:9). Consequently, some faithful Jews were converted, thinking of the church to be right in refusing to pay the tax for the Temple of Capitoline Jupiter.[261]

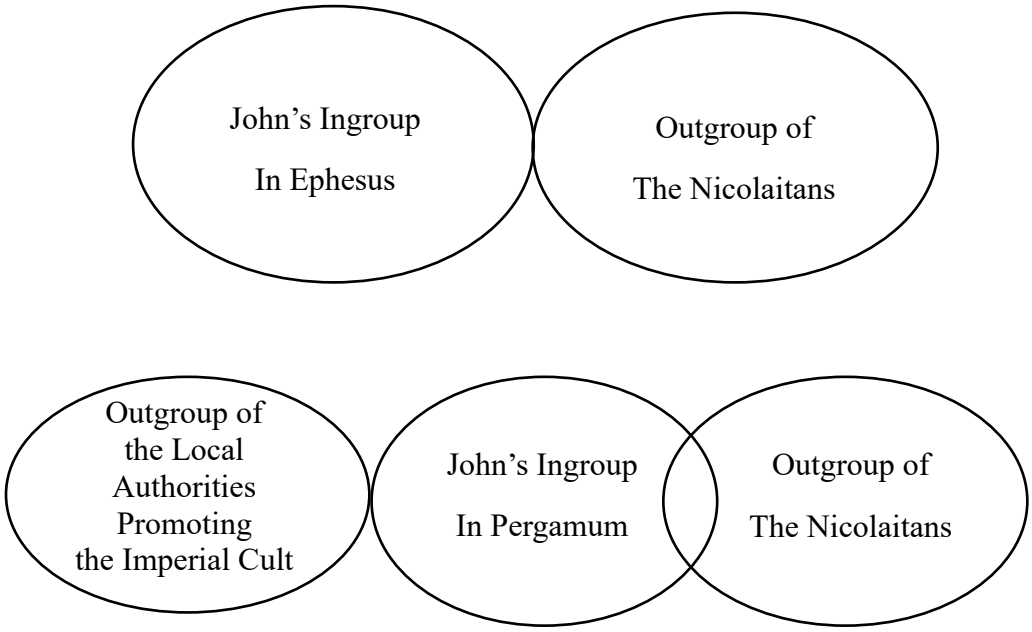
In response to the increase of converts (deviants in social psychological terms), the Jewish communities could not help but take measures to differentiate themselves from the faithful churches by accusing them of neither paying the Jewish tax nor participating in the imperial cult. In the eyes of the Jews, they were true Jews, and the church members were not Jews. Making accusations against the faithful Jesus's followers could be the best way to maximize the difference between the church and the synagogue.[262] Through their accusations, local authorities

[259] Hogg, "The Social Identity Perspective," 257.
[260] Hogg "The Social Identity Perspective," 258. Hogg, "Social Identity," 573-74.
[261] Thompson, "Domitian and the Jewish Tax," 329. Mark R. J. Bredin, "The Synagogue of Satan Accusation in Revelation 2:9," 164.
[262] The fact that Jews accused and persecuted Jesus's followers can be found in Gospels, Acts, and the Pauline letters (Mt 5:11; 10:17-25; Mk 13:9-13; Lk 6:22; Jn 16:2; Acts 7:1-8:3; 9:1-9; 13:44-52; 14:1-7, 19; 17:5-9, 13; 21:27-36; 1 Cor 15:9; 1Thess 2:14-16; Gal 1:13-14, 23; Phil 3:6; 1Pet 4:14-16; Jam 2:7; Heb 13:13). Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 163.

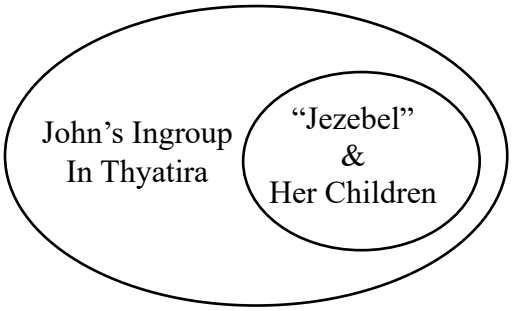
could detect evaders of taxes. On the contrary, there was a possibility that those who were afraid of Jewish daily harassment or blackmail could give up their faith in Jesus and go back to the synagogue to avoid the threat. Thus, Jesus encourages them to be "faithful until death" (2:10) and promises to "keep them from the hour of trial" (3:10). Accordingly, John needed to encourage his people to hold tight to their right faith in Jesus Christ by intentionally stigmatizing Jewish outgroups with the extreme negative phrase "synagogue of Satan."[263] For John, this was the best way to enhance his ingroup's "self-enhancement and self-esteem."[264]

The churches in Ephesus, Pergamum, and Thyatira had interaction with Hellenistic Gnostic outgroups such as the Nicolaitans, the Balaamites, and "Jezebel" and her followers.

Diagram 3. The Intergroup or Intragroup Conflicts in the Churches in Ephesus, Pergamum, and Thyatira (The churches have a weak social identity so that the group boundaries could be easily permeated.)



[263] These Jewish groups are different from other Hellenistic Gnostic adversaries since Christ does not ask them to repent.
[264] Hogg "The Social Identity Perspective," 255-256.



These three churches receive both approval and disapproval from Jesus. He praises the Ephesus church for rejecting an outgroup of itinerant false teachers in the past (2:2) and hating the "works of the Nicolaitans"(2:6), another itinerant outgroup. All the members succeeded in keeping their social group boundary from being permeated by outgroups effectively so that the outgroups could not make the church members their followers yet. The ingroup was in confrontation with the outgroup (see diagram 3). However, since they have lost "the love they had at first"(2:4), Jesus requests them to repent (2:5). It should be noted that Jesus's request for repentance has nothing to do with how to deal with their outgroups. The reason why Jesus criticizes their spiritual condition is that there is a possibility that their dried belief could weaken their social identity and self-esteem. Consequently, their dried mind could cause the church members to accept the false teaching of the outgroups shortly since group boundaries are permeable.

In the letter to the Pergamum church, Jesus praises them for not denying their faith in him even though they live "where Satan's throne is" (2:13). Through the previous study, we found that the Pergamum was the political and religious center in the Province of Asia, and the local authorities as a political outgroup directly threatened the church to participate in the imperial cult.[265] Jesus's followers in Pergamum confronted the political threats related to the imperial cult,

[265] Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, 78-82.

but they were "holding fast to Jesus's name (2:13)." On the other hand, Jesus's disapproval is more severe because a small portion of the ingroup members became the Balaamites and the Nicolaitans inside the church not outside the church (2:14). This case is that the social ingroup boundary has been permeated by outgroups, making an intersectional relationship (See Diagram 3). Jesus asks the church to immediately repent of allowing some to accept the false teaching. Otherwise, Jesus will make war against them (2:16). Unlike the letter to the church Ephesus, Jesus's request for repentance is directly connected to the act of following the false teaching. In accordance, the penalty is more severe. John stereotypes the outgroup and its false teaching by using the notorious name "Balaam." Thus, he maximizes the differences between his ingroup and the outgroups.

The condition of Thyatira was worse because the false teaching more permeated John's ingroup (See diagram 3).[266] Through the powerful leadership of "Jezebel," some members of the ingroup became her "children" so that a schism occurred within one group, which is called "intragroup conflict." The influential female leader "Jezebel" seems to have been a member of the ingroup because Jesus gave her time to repent. Jesus's judgment is the most severe: "I (Jesus) will strike her children dead" (2:23).

Many scholars assume that the teachings of the Nicolaitans, Balaam, and Jezebel are identical, not independent because these are depicted in identical terms (See diagram 1).[267]

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[266] Smalley points out that "at Pergamum antinomianism was practiced by 'some' (2:14), while at Thyatira it seems to have been aggressively promoted, and widespread as well as deeply ingrained." Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 74.

[267] Several prominent scholars such as Müller, Klauck, and Fiorenza argues that these symbolic names "Balaam" and "Jezebel" refer to the same group of male and female prophets called the Nicolaitans. Kelhoffer, "The Relevance of Revelation's Date and the Imperial Cult for John's Appraisal of the Value of Christians' Suffering in Revelation 1-3," 574; Carter, "Accommodating 'Jezebel' and Withdrawing John," 33; Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 148; Boring, *Revelation*, 92.

"Jezebel's" teaching would be that even Jesus's followers should attend the cultural feasts, buy and eat the sacrificial meat sold in the marketplace, and take part in the cultic culture.[268] Furthermore, her Gnostic secret knowledge could lead her followers to commit fornication (Rev 2:20) because false theology and false practice cannot be separated. Even though it often means an action of betraying one's faith symbolically throughout the Bible, it also means "sexual licence" related to idolatry literally.[269] For example, the apostolic conference decides that believers should "abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication" (Acts 15:29).[270] Paul, mentioning the Baal Peor case in Num 25:1-18, asks his people neither to eat food sacrificed to idols nor to "commit fornication" (1 Cor 10:8) because there are people saying, "All things are lawful" (1 Cor 10:23). John also shows that Balaam's teaching is directly connected to "eat food sacrificed to idols and practice fornication" (Rev 2:14). "Jezebel's" Gnostic secret knowledge could cause believers to commit fornication without feeling guilty inside the church. Thus, her teaching is the most destructive to the churches. Therefore, John's symbolic descriptions of the prophetess as Jezebel are his attempt to stereotype "Jezebel" and her "children" as an outgroup that is distinguishable from those who reject her teaching and have not known the "deep things of Satan."

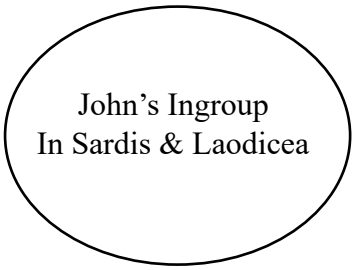
John regarded "Jezebel" as his rival because his leadership was severely damaged, and he had to compete with her for leadership within one group. Since "Jezebel" was not one of the leaders outside the ingroup but a powerful female leader within the ingroup,[271] John expressed more hostility toward her and her followers. For this reason, "Jezebel" was the most dangerous

[268] Boring, *Revelation*, 93.
[269] Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 63.
[270] Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 63.
[271] Hogg "The Social Identity Perspective," 263.

opponent from John's perspective.

The three churches above, due to their wavering faith and the false teaching, seem to have participated in the Roman cultic culture. Thus, they could minimize the possibility to be targets of the Jewish communities and local authorities. That is why there is no mention of Jewish threats in these three letters. Furthermore, the three churches with weak social identities were not attractive to the Jews so the churches were not a threat to the Jewish communities.

Diagram 4. No Conflict in the Churches in Sardis and Laodicea
(The churches have the weakest social identity.)



Lastly, John's ingroups in Sardis and Laodicea did not have any internal schism as well as any conflict with other outgroups. Although the city of Sardis had the largest Jewish community and synagogue, there was no indication of any Jewish affliction.[272] Only Sardis and Laodicea are denounced for their spiritual indolence (3:2-3) and complacency due to wealth (3:17) with no or little praise: "You (the Sardis church) have a name of being alive, but you are dead"(3:1); "Although you (the Laodicea church) say that you are rich, you have prospered, and you need nothing, you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked"(3:17). In other words, their spiritual life was almost dead. The members were not prototypical at all. They lost their ingroup prototypes and norms which prescribed who they are, what they believe, and

[272] The synagogue at Sardis was the largest ancient synagogue consisting of very wealthy and influential Jews. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 168-72.

how they live in the world as Jesus's witnesses. Considering both no sign of intra- or intergroup conflicts with any outgroup and their wealth, they had already taken part in the cultic culture interlocked with the Roman political and economic system. These two churches consisting of the ingroup members who were not prototypical could be neither attacked by any outgroup nor attractive to any outgroup.

Putting all this together, the two most faithful churches in Smyrna and Philadelphia were afflicted by the Jews (the synagogue of Satan) due to their strong faith in Jesus. Since they had a strong Christological faith, there was no room for other Hellenistic heresies, but their strong Christology caused the Jews to be hostile toward them. The two most unfaithful churches in Sardis and Laodicea never experienced any persecution or threat outside the churches. The churches that were almost dead with spiritual indolence and complacency due to wealth were not a target of any political or religious outgroups in the society. The other three churches in Ephesus, Pergamum, and Thyatira with a wavering faith in Jesus fell easy prey to the Hellenistic heresies outside or within the churches.

This analysis of the seven letters accords with current studies assisting that the seven churches in Asia Minor were exposed to various kinds of hostility and affliction for their belief in Jesus, but it was "localized and sporadic, not empire-wide and organized from the top."[273] In response to such a situation, John would feel his pastoral obligation to help the churches establish healthy social identities by presenting ingroups prototypes and norms which can prescribe who they are, what they believe, and how they live in the world.

[273] It included social condemnation and economic revenge for not participating fully in the imperial cult and the commercial life of the society. Such an environment could cause Jesus's followers to be in prison or to be put to death by local authorities from time to time. Fanning, *Revelation*, 30.

Chapter 6

John's Presentation of Theological Ingroup Prototypes and Norms (Rev 4-22)

In the Roman cultic culture, the seven churches faced social identity crises for various reasons such as the loss of their first love, the acceptance of the false teachings, the threats of the Jews, their spiritual indolence, and complacency derived from wealth. This identity crisis shows that their "ingroup prototypes and norms" that prescribe the group's identity (who are we?) and behavior (how do we act?) needed to be refreshed and clearer. "Ingroup prototypes," one of the key elements of "social categorization," are "cognitive representations of a group's norms, where such norms are social regularities that are bounded by group memberships and describe behavior that defines group membership."[274] John, therefore, tried to present more clear ingroup prototypes and norms that stipulate the group's religious identity (who are we? or what do we believe?) and behavior (how do we act?) against the false teachings of the Nicolaitans and "Jezebel," that could be more detailed in the apocalyptic part than in the letter part.

In Rev 4-5, John clarifies what we believe and who God and the Lamb are (the doctrine of God and Christology) in contrast to the Jewish and Gnostic ideas. In the rest of the apocalyptic part, he answers the questions about the ingroup identity (Who are we and how do we live as Jesus's followers?" (Ecclesiology)) by presenting "ingroup prototypes" and "outgroup prototypes." For example, the two witnesses in Rev 11 and the bride of the Lamb in Rev 19-22

[274] Hogg, "The Social Identity Perspective," 259.

represent the believers as true witnesses (self-stereotyping), while the second beast in Rev 13 and the great whore in Rev 17-8 symbolize false teachers and "Jezebel" who deceive people (outgroup-stereotyping).[275]

Through this process of social identification, John expects his ingroup to internalize and assimilate the desired ingroup prototypes and norms and to compare the ingroup prototypes to the outgroup prototypes so that they may gain positive ingroup distinctiveness between John's ingroup and other groups (social comparison).[276]

What Do We Believe? (The Doctrine of God and Christology, Rev 4-5)

God Worshipped as the Creator of the Universe (4)

In Rev 4, John presents one of the important ingroup norms which differentiate his ingroup from other political, Jewish, and Hellenistic outgroups, that is, the doctrine of God. In heaven, God is worshipped as nothing but the Creator by all the creatures (4:11): "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created." Rev 4 puts great emphasis on the fact that God created the whole world. This affirmation of God as the Creator seems to have been aimed at the Gnostic concept of God.

John's description of God and the universe here is based on the "three-story universe" (cf. 5:3, 13)[277] and "anthropomorphic theology." John describes God sitting on the throne like a human being with a body (4:2) and dwelling in heaven (4:1). Some Gnostic writers employed the

[275] Hogg, "The Social Identity Perspective," 254.
[276] Hogg "The Social Identity Perspective," 255-256.
[277] Though the phrase "under the earth" does not occur elsewhere in Revelation, the related conception "abyss" is found in Rev 9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1,3. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 348.

scientific and philosophical concepts of the "geocentric universe" and the "theology of the Monad."[278] However, instead of using these philosophical concepts, John employs the ancient cosmological view of the three-story universe and the concept of anthropomorphic theology.

According to the theory of the three-story universe, the universe, as a unified system called a "monism," was divided into heaven above, the earth in the middle, and the underworld below.[279] Each area was ruled by a specialized god: heaven by El or Zeus, water by Yam or Poseidon, and under-world by Sheol (Mot) or Hades. Based on this cosmology, the Hebrew Scripture and the ancient Greek epics presented gods as anthropomorphic, so that gods had human-like bodies (examples in the OT and NT: Genesis 3:8, Exodus 33:18, Ezekiel 1:1, Daniel 7:9, Revelation 4:1 and 6:12 as well as in Homeric epics).[280]

However, in the new theories of the "geocentric universe" and the "theology of the Monad" which Gnostic writers began to use, God could no longer have a body so anthropomorphic God was rejected.[281] God as "Monad" (One) and an "Unmoved Mover" must be wholly spiritual, immaterial, and unknown,[282] dwelling in the divine realm beyond the "geocentric universe."[283] From this perspective, Jewish Gnostic writers changed the God of creation in the Hebrew Bible into a monster "Yaldabaoth," who Sophia (Lady "Wisdom": intertestamental Jewish speculation) gives birth to. This monster creates the lower, material geocentric cosmos from dark matter. Accordingly, all the material creatures he made are evil. Yaldabaoth proclaims, "I am the Lord

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[278] Gregory J. Riley, *The River of God* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 214-5.
[279] Riley, *The River of God*, 38-39, 91.
[280] Riley, *The River of God*, 23-32.
[281] Riley, *The River of God*, 40.
[282] Riley, *The River of God*, 42-43.
[283] According to the geocentric system, the earth is set at the center of the cosmos and surrounded by the air and the eight heavenly spheres. The eight spheres consist of those of the seven planets and the fixed stars which close them off. Beyond them lies the realm of the "unknown God," the Pleroma (fullness), with its own graduated worlds. Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 67-69.

and beside me, there is no other" (Isa 45:5). It is apparent that Yaldabaoth, who the *Apocryphon of John* describes, is the "jealous God" of creation in the Hebrew Bible (Exod 20:5).[284]

Even though he may have heard about "Monad" and "geocentric cosmology" which Gnosticism was based on, he depicted God as worshipped as the Creator of the immaterial and material world and all the creatures in it (Rev 4:11) by keeping the ancient three-story cosmology and anthropomorphic theology. Since the seven churches in Asia Minor were familiar with the Pauline tradition,[285] John certainly knew the concepts of Monad and geocentric cosmology which Paul used in his letters. However, he, as a Jew familiar with the Hebrew Scripture, used the cosmology and theology of the Old Testament to affirm the Creator and the goodness of His creatures. By doing this, John could attack the Gnostic concept of God and maximize differences between his teaching and the false teaching of the Nicolaitan and "Jezebel."

Proclaiming that God is the Creator, John expresses God's total sovereignty over the universe. In heaven, John sees God, as the Creator, fully worshipped by the four living creatures (representative of the creation) and the twenty-four elders (representative of faithful Christians). The fact that God is worshipped as the creator of "this world" means that Revelation rejects "dualism,"[286] but affirms that God alone is in charge of the whole universe.

The fact that "From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder" (4:5) bolsters God's total sovereignty. This is the language of "theophany," used by Israel to portray the manifestation of God's holiness (Exod. 19:16; Job 36: 30-32; Ps. 77:17-18; Ezek. 1:4,

[284] Riley, *The River of God*, 46-47.
[285] Boring, *Revelation,* 6.
[286] In Revelation, the great dragon (Satan) is neither equal to God nor an independent being. He was "cast out into the earth" (12:9). He was allowed to act in a limited time (12:12).

13, 14, 24).[287]

4: 5: “flashes of lightning and rumblings and peals of thunder”

8:5: “peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake”

11:19: “flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunders, an earthquake, and heavy hail”

16:18-21: “flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a violent earthquake… and huge hailstones”

This formula used in 4:5 is repeated at the opening of the seventh seal (8:5), the sounding of the seventh trumpets (11:19), and the pouring out of the seventh bowl (16:18-21):[288] This progressive expansion of the formula reveals that God created all the creatures, is in charge of them, leads the three series of judgment with the Lamb. This argument that the whole universe is ruled by God, the Creator, may have been an attack on the Roman imperial cult and the Gnostic teachings.[289]

The Lamb’s Twofold Christology: Suffering and Victory

In Rev 5, John presents a well-balanced Christology. His Christology rejects both “Gnostic Docetism” which regards Jesus as divine and “Jewish Ebionism” which regards Jesus as

[287] Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 104.
[288] 41-2; Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 293-5.
[289] Stephen Moore asserts that Rev 4-5 describes God as a “patriarchal God who exercises domination over creation,” making God and Christ none other than Domitian himself. From his perspective, John depicts God and Christ as a divinized Domitian. Stephen D. Moore, “Hypermasculinity and Divinity,’ in *A Feminist Companion to the Apocalypse of John*, ed. Amy Jill Levine (London: T. & T. Clark, 2009), 180-204, quoted in Morton, *Recent Research on Revelation*, 125.

human.[290] John sees the Lamb as a Slaughtered Lamb (ἀρνίον)[291] worshipped by all the creatures just as God is worshipped by all the creatures, which means that Jesus is God. On top of that, the victory of the Lamb is based on Jesus's sacrificial death on earth (Rev 5:9-10, 12). In other words, Rev 5 lays great emphasis on Jesus's actual, physical death and resurrection, that is, the earthly work of Jesus.

Gnosticism needs their savior who is sent from the immaterial Monad since the material world is evil and ruled by evil Yaldabaoth and his archons. Our body belongs to the evil material world so it is not the object of salvation. Thus, only the soul can be delivered and returned to the Monad by gnosis given by the savior who is sent from the Monad.[292] Accordingly, such a thought denies both Jesus's incarnation and his sacrificial true death and brings forth docetic Christology.

Like Gnostic Docetism, for the Nicolaitans and "Jezebel's" followers, Jesus's physical incarnation, death, and resurrection may not have been important. They just regarded Jesus as a wise teacher, not a Savior who delivered human beings from sin. As seen, they boasted of "having known the deep things of Satan" (2:24). They saw themselves as the elect who possessed the mysterious knowledge. The Hellenistic Gnostic teachers made serious problems

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[290] Ebionism was a view of the nature of Jesus Christ Jewish Christians had. Ebionites regarded "Jesus as a prophet or as the Jewish Messiah, but not as divine," that is, a "low Christology." They sought to combine their faith in Jesus with a "strict numerical monotheism" by denying Jesus's divinity. Richard N. Longenecker, *The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity* (Vancouver: Regent College, 2001), 2; Smalley assumes that there were three groups of believers in John's community: 1) Jewish Christians, 2) Hellenistic Christians, and 3) Balanced Christians. He insists that "those with a 'low' Christology had moved further towards an Ebionitic stance, while those whose estimation of Jesus's person was 'high' had become more clearly inclined towards a gnostic -docetic position." Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 4-5.

[291] The Christological title "the Lamb"(ἀρνίον) begins to appear at chapter 5 and is used 28 (7x4) times in the entire book (5:6, 8, 12, 13; 6:1, 16; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 22:1,3). This word is used once to describe a beast (13:11). In other books of the New Testament, it is used just one time in John 21:15. Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon,* s.v. "ἀρνίον."

[292] Riley, *The River of God*, 202.

within the churches in Asia Minor.

In response to them, John unfolds the Lamb Christology, highlighting the physical death and resurrection on earth: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation” (5:9). The Lamb’s victory is achieved through humility, not through arrogance.

Since no one is worthy to open the scroll, John begins to weep bitterly (Rev 5:4). At that time, one of the elders appeases him saying, “Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals” (5:5). According to the elder's voice, John must have expected a spectacular and magnificent lion, as king of animals, to appear and stand at the center of heaven. Unlike his expectation, a lamb, one of the weakest animals, appears instead. Furthermore, it is not a normal lamb but a lamb “which seems to have slaughtered” (5:6). The following praises by the four living creatures and the twenty-four priests confirm that the Lamb's victory is based on its suffering, death, and blood (5:9-10, 12). There is a great contrast between what is heard and what is seen, the strongest and the weakest. This paradoxical contrast between “lion” and “lamb” is the most important key to understanding Revelation's Christology.

This concept of Messiah as a slaughtered Lamb had nothing to do with the political Messiah for whom Jews had been waiting. This concept of suffering Messiah was also totally different from what Gnostics regarded as their savior. Connecting the Messiah to the suffering servant (Isa 53:7) and the Passover lamb was done by the early church after the day of Pentecost.[293] The

[293] According to Dunn, even the historical Jesus experienced difficulty in liking suffering and death with the given concept of messiahship during his life. It is right that there was no concept of a suffering Messiah in the pre-Easter. James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*: *An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity*

slaughtered Lamb, highlighting victory through the humble, sacrificial death, transformed the ideas of Jewish Messiah and Gnostic revealer.

Therefore, John's unique Christological title "the Lamb" is to function as a safety device to correct the Jewish traditional military Messianic idea and the arrogant Gnostic Docetism which denies suffering but seeks glory or arrogance. The title "Lamb" is the important point where victory meets suffering, the soul meets the body, and the Theology of Glory meets the Theology of Cross.[294] What is critical is that suffering must precede victory and the Theology of Cross must come first before the Theology of Glory. Jesus's real death must precede his resurrection.

The Lamb which has obtained victory through the death of the cross is now qualified to open scrolls and lead God's Judgment after Rev 6. The Lamb Christology, therefore, severely attacks both the Gnostic Docetism and the Jewish Ebionism. Christology as a key ingroup norm is the best way to differentiate John's ingroup from the Jewish or Gnostic outgroup. This unique two folded Christology produces the two folded Ecclesiology: the suffering church on earth and the victorious church in heaven. Likewise, Christology (what we believe) has a great influence on Ecclesiology (who we are) because the church, as an "eschatological community," has to live as true witnesses following the Lamb (how to behave), who won a victory through his sacrificial death.

Who Are We? (Ecclesiology, Rev 6-22)

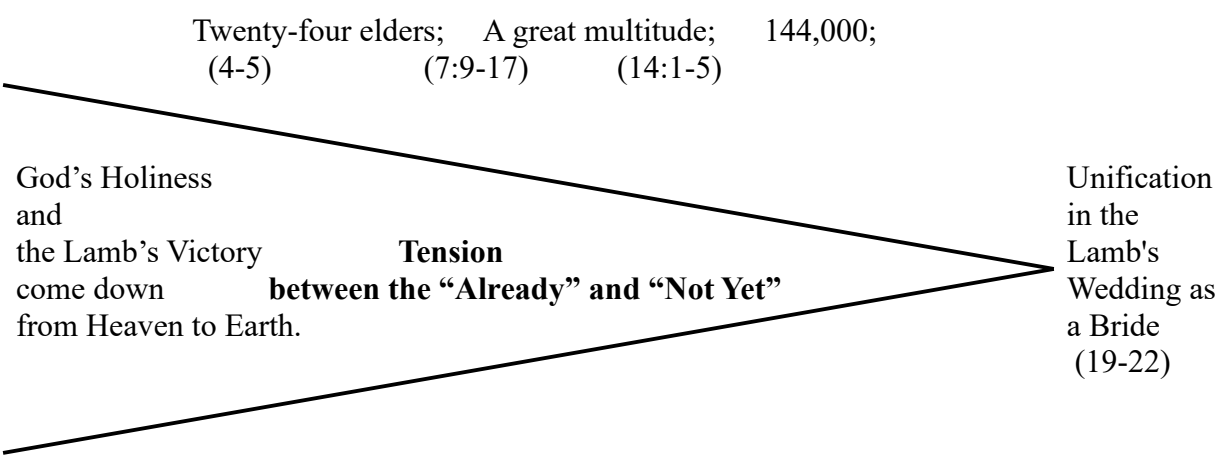
The Suffering Church and the Victorious Church: the Twofold Ecclesiology

Throughout the apocalyptic part, John proposes ingroup prototypes (perfect examples

(Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 43.
[294] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 352.

representing the ingroup) answering the questions: "Who are we?" and "How do we live as Jesus's followers."[295] His presentation of ingroup prototypes could provide his marginalized congregations having a social identity crisis with a sense of belonging to a prestigious high-status group, which enhances "self-esteem."[296] In this sense, John links his ingroup to the prototypical earthly churches who suffer for the name of Jesus ("144,000," "two witnesses," and "a woman") and the heavenly churches who have already won a victory ("twenty-four elders," "a great multitude," and "144,000") as follows:

Diagram 5. John's Connection of His Ingroups to the Heavenly Church as Ingroup Prototypes


Heavenly Victorious Church
Twenty-four elders; (4-5)
A great multitude; (7:9-17)
144,000; (14:1-5)
God's Holiness and the Lamb's Victory come down from Heaven to Earth.
Tension between the "Already" and "Not Yet"
Unification in the Lamb's Wedding as a Bride (19-22)
Earthly Suffering Church
Seven Churches; (1-3)
144,000; (7:1-8)
Two witnesses; (11:1-13)
A woman (12)

Jesus's eschatological promise to victors in Rev 3:21 indicates John's intention to

[295] Hogg, "The Social Identity Perspective," 259.
[296] Hogg "The Social Identity Perspective," 255-256.

connect their identity of low self-esteem to a desired and ideal prototype:[297] "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne." Concerning John's intention, there is a crucial clue in the eschatological promise to victors given to Laodicea:[298] "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my father on his throne" (Rev 3:21). This verse functions as a connector between the earthly suffering churches and the heavenly church which has shared Jesus's victory. Rev 4-5 shows that Jesus shared God's throne, and the twenty-four elders representing all the believers also shared the seat.

John connects his earthly marginalized church which suffers politically, economically, and religiously in the Roman Empire (the "particular church" in a particular time and space on earth) to the "universal church" in heaven which transcends time and space (ideal ingroup prototypes). He also relates the "visible church" suffering for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (1:9; 6:9; 11:7; 12:11, 17; 19:10; 20:4) to the "invisible church" which has already triumphed in heaven. He couples the "immanent church" living on earth following the life and death of incarnated Jesus (11:4) to the "transcendent church" sharing Jesus's victory in heaven. In this manner, the two-fold Christology of "suffering and victory" brings about "the two-fold ecclesiology": the suffering and fighting church ("ecclesia militans") as witnesses on earth, and the victorious church ("ecclesia triumphans") in heaven.[299] The church on earth is not alone because the church in heaven has already triumphed and cheers God's people on earth to victory.

At last, God's glorious throne and Jesus's victory in heaven (Rev 4-5) come to earth and

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[297] Prototypes which represent groups are usually ideal not average. The more self-conceptually uncertain one is, the more one strives to belong to high entitativity groups that have clearly defined consensual prototypes. Hogg, "The Social Identity Perspective," 254.
[298] Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation*, 173.
[299] Boring, *Revelation*, 139.

become fully realized in the new heaven and new earth (Rev 21:1-22:5). In God's kingdom, these two churches on earth and heaven become one whole holy church as the Lamb's bride (21:2-3; 9-27); the bride (Ecclesiology) and the Lamb (Christology) then become one at the wedding. Through the unification of Christology (what they believe) and Ecclesiology (who they are), John offers the most powerful spiritual social identity to his ingroup.

Furthermore, this two-fold Christology and Ecclesiology form the unique tensional structure of Revelation: the "already" and "not yet" of God's kingdom. It is compatible with the unique Christian experience. Therefore, John admonishes his congregation and us to repent and to live as sacrificial witnesses "here and now" in the tension between the "already" and "not yet" of God's kingdom (3:3; 16:15). The tensional structure of the "the "already" and "not yet" of God's kingdom" could be fatal to the realized Eschatology of the false teaching.

Comparing John's Ingroup Self-Stereotyping to the Outgroup Stereotyping

John stereotypes his ingroup as "true witnesses"[300] who hold the testimony of Jesus (19:10) like "144,000" (7:1-8), two witnesses (11:1-13), and a woman (12) who keep God's word and live as true witnesses (self-stereotyping). If they are faithful, many people will come from all the nations and respect their faith like the most faithful churches in Smyrna and Philadelphia (3:9). Especially, the story of the two witnesses (11:1-3) would be the best prototype (example) of John's ingroup.

In Rev 9:20-1, even after the two sets of seven series, the rest of those who were not killed did not repent of their murders, sorceries, fornication, or thefts. Rather they did not stop

[300] Boring insists that John regards his congregation as "the eschatological prophetic People of God." Boring, *Revelation*, 142.

worshipping demons and idols. It is significantly implied that judgments alone could not produce repentance and faith. This is why one more series, the "seven thunders," is apparently proposed only to be canceled (10:3-4).[301]Then, John is asked to eat the open small scroll[302](10:9-10) and is told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings" (10:11). Even though the author provides no clear literary indications that help us know the contents of the open scroll,[303] it is apparent that the scroll is all about the way God delivers numerous people from all nations through the church's sacrificial witness like two witnesses (11:3-13). In this respect, John intentionally stereotypes his ingroup and the whole church as "the eschatological prophetic People of God." In other words, he affirms the "prophethood of all believers."[304]

Now, the story of "two witnesses" in Rev 11 shows in a visionary way who we are and how all Jesus's believers have to live as true prophets quite contrary to John's opponent outgroups of false prophets. The two witnesses, representing John's ingroup, exercise their prophetic ministry (11:3-13). As prophets, their ministry is "martyrdom" (μαρτυς, 11:3; cf. "testimony" (μαρτυρια,

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[301] Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 82.

[302] In Rev 10, the word scroll appears three times: "an open little scroll" (βιβλαριδιον, 10:2), "the scroll"(το βιβλιον, 10:8), and "the little scroll" (το βιβλαριδιον, 10:9, 10). There are different opinions regarding whether this scroll is the same as the scroll (το βιβλιον) in chap. 5 (David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, World Biblical Commentary 52B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 571-2). Actually, even though the sealed scroll occurred several times (5:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9), the contents of the scroll are unknown to us so far. For the following reasons, this scroll in Rev10 refers to the scroll in Rev 5. First of all, the fact that John uses "βιβλαριδιον" (diminutive) and "βιβλιον" interchangeably to refer to one scroll suggests that John treats the two words as though they are synonymous (Blount, *Revelation*, 190, 198). Moreover, another "mighty angel" who brings the scroll down from heaven to earth (10:1-2) reminds us of the first "mighty angel" introducing the sealed scroll in the right hand of God (5:2). In addition, it is certain that John's description of the scroll in the hand of God (5:1) and the scroll in chap.10 is modeled after Ezekiel's similar description (Ezek. 2:8-3:4) (Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 571-2). In Ezekiel's case, God himself opens the scroll (2:10) and gives it to Ezekiel with the order to eat it (3:1-2). In Revelation, the scroll must be opened by the Lamb, so it is taken from the hand of God by the Lamb (5:7), who opens it (6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12; 8:1). Then it is taken from heaven to earth by an angel (10:1-2), who gives it to John to eat (10:8-10). The sequence of revelation, from God through Jesus to the prophet John, corresponds exactly to Rev. 1:1, which says that the revelation of Jesus Christ comes from God through Jesus Christ to his servants. All things considered, the scrolls in chapters 5, 10 are identical, but there is a sharp contrast between "sealed" and "open"(Boring, *Revelation*, 140).

[303] Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 571.

[304] Boring, *Revelation*, 142.

11:7) which means both "martyr" and "witness" in Greek. In John's context, martyrdom is not something secondary but inherent in the prophetic role itself (11:7-10). In the Old Testament, some prophets such as Ezekiel and Jeremiah suffer as an integral part of their prophetic vocation. Furthermore, a true prophet must suffer as the badge of his authenticity.[305] Moreover, these two witnesses have divinely given miraculous power to make havoc on their enemies, just as Moses and Elijah did (11:5-6).

After finishing their testimony, they are killed just as Jesus was crucified (11:7-8). People from "every people, tribe, language, and nation" celebrate because these two prophets have tormented those who live on the earth (11: 9-10). But God raises them and calls them up to heaven in the sight of the people (11:11-12). Then people begin to repent from now on (11:13-17). This narrative reminds us of the "suffering servant" in Isa. 53 and the Philippian Christological hymn (Phil. 2:5-11).

The two witnesses, as one of John's best ingroup prototypes, give their true testimony humbly and sacrificially. In this respect, only this humble and sacrificial way enables people to repent and take part in the Kingdom of God. John wanted his ingroup members to be "true witnesses" since there were so many false teachings and false teachers. At last, many people and kings from all the nations participate in God's Kingdom because of the "true witnesses" (Rev 21:24): "The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it." This is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise of blessing for all nations (21:24-27; 7:9-17; Gen. 13:3; 22:18; Isa. 60:1-5).[306] This open, humble, and sacrificial way is sharply in contrast

[305] Boring, *Revelation*, 144.

[306] John has much interest in the salvation of all the nations through their true testimony. Therefore, this inclusive language occurs seven times: (1) "every tribe and language and people and nation" (5:9; cf. I Cor 10:32-33); (2) Rev 7:9 "nations, tribes, people, tongues; (3) Rev 10:11 "peoples, nations, tongues, kings"; (4) Rev 11:9 "peoples, tribes, tongues, nations; (5) Rev 13:7 "tribe, people, language, nation"; (6) Rev 14:6 "nation, tribe, tongue, people; (7) Rev

with the imperial political way or "Jezebel's" arrogant attitude derived from the closed secret knowledge.

On the other hand, John stereotypes "Jezebel" and other outgroups as "false evil prophets" who deceive people including the people of God. John makes the great dragon (Satan) with two beasts (Rev 13) and the great whore of Babylon (Rev 17-18) outgroup prototypes (examples) to attack his opponents effectively.[307] This is the best way to differentiate John's ingroup from his outgroups and compare John's ingroup identity to the outgroups' identity easily. The great dragon "deceives the whole habitable world" (12:9). The second beast also deceives (πλανᾷ) those who live on earth (13:14). It is identified as the "false prophet who had performed the signs by which he deceived (ἐπλάνησεν) those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its (the first beast's) image" (19:20).[308]

The great whore of Babylon is the climax of John's outgroup stereotyping. The great whore of Babylon, with whom all the nations have fornicated (14:8; 17:2; 17:4; 18:3; 19.2), evokes "Jezebel" who misleads the church members into practicing fornication in Rev 2.[309] The prescription of her luxury adornments (2 Kgs 9:30) also evokes the actual person Jezebel of the Old Testament who, as support of Baal, contaminated the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel. Furthermore, "she was drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of witnesses to Jesus" (17:6; 18:24; 19:2). Her acts of misleading nations and afflicting Jesus's witnesses in Rev 17 are the same as "Jezebel's" acts of misleading and afflicting John's ingroup in Rev 2. As

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17:15 "peoples, crowds, nations, tongues." Aune, Revelation 1-5, 362.

[307] Hogg, "The Social Identity Perspective," 253, 259.

[308] Duff, *Who Rides the Beast?*, 118-125.

[309] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 204; Carter, "Accommodating 'Jezebel' and Withdrawing John," 34-35; Duff, *Who Rides the Beast?*, 83-96..

mentioned, the reason that John shows extreme hostility toward "Jezebel" and symbolizes her in the great whore of Babylon in Rev 17 is that "Jezebel" is the most competent but dangerous female rival in his ingroup. This image of the great whore of Babylon as an outgroup prototype is sharply contrasted to the bride of the Lamb, the climax of John's ingroup self-stereotyping.

Table 3. Contrasts between the Great Whore of Babylon and the Bride of New Jerusalem[310]

The vision of the great whore of Babylon	**The vision of the bride of New Jerusalem**
The great whore (17:1-2, 5; 18:9)	The bride (21:2,9)
Kings submitting to Babylon's sovereignty (17:9, 18)	Kings submitting to God's rule (21:24)
The wealth of the nations brought to her (18:12-17)	The glory of the nations brought to New Jerusalem (21:24-26).
Impurities, abominations, and deception characterize Babylon (17:4-5; 18:23)	All unclean, abominable, and those perpetuating falsehood barred from her (21:8,27)
Shedding of the saints' blood (17:6; 18:24)	Healing and life (22:1-2)
Saints exhorted to leave the city (18:4)	Blessing on those entering the city (22:14)
Babylon's sins will pile up as high as heaven (18:5).	New Jerusalem will descend out of heaven from God (21:2,10).
Babylon will not be found any longer (18:21).	New Jerusalem will be forever and ever (22:5).
Evil name on horsehead (17:5)	God's name on the inhabitants' foreheads (22:4)
The city's inhabitants will not have their names written in the book of life (17:8).	The city's inhabitants will have their names written in the book of life (21:27)
Babylon glorifies herself (18:7).	New Jerusalem has the glory of God (21:11, 23).
Babylon will be the dwelling place of demons (18:2)	New Jerusalem will be the dwelling place of God (21:3, 22; 22:1, 3-4).
The harlot appeals to those who live only for the temporal (18:3).	The bride appeals to those who live for the eternal glory of God (21:11)
Those attracted to the harlot worship the beast (13:8, 12; cf. 17:8).	Those attracted to the bride worship God (21:7; 22:9)
Babylon's fall brings mourning from the kings, merchants, and mariners, but rejoicing from the saints (18:9-20).	Bride's wedding elicits rejoicing (19:7)
Harlot with excessive luxuries committed	Fine linen, bright and clean, was given (19:8)

[310] Robert W. Klund, *The Plot of Revelation 4-22* (PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2002), 214.

adultery with the kings of the earth (17:2-4; 18:3; 19:2).	
Harlot drunk with the blood of those with testimony to Jesus (17:6:18:24)	

Likewise, John helps his ingroup members compare their ingroup prototypes and norms to the outgroups. Then, just as he asks of "Jezebel's" followers, he asks Jesus's followers in the Roman world to "come out of her, my people, so that you do not take part in her sins, and so that you do not share in her plagues" (18:4). Instead, John invites Jesus's followers to the marriage supper of the Lamb (19:9).

Chapter 7

Conclusion

It has been believed that the Book of Revelation, written as anti-Roman literature, shows enmity toward the Roman Empire and empire-wide persecutions of followers of Jesus. Indeed, the apocalyptic part (Rev 4-22) reflects much hatred toward the empire and suffering from political power (11-18). However, the traditional view that persecution against Jesus's followers in Asia Minor executed by the Roman Empire is the backdrop for the book of Revelation has been usually doubted in current scholarship. The reason is that there is no convincing evidence to support imperial systematic persecutions at the time of the composition of Revelation. Furthermore, the letter part (2-3) does not indicate any full-scale persecution, unlike the apocalyptic part. This visible discrepancy makes the interpretation of Revelation more complicated.

The critical problem revealed in the letter part is theological rather than political. Even though he mentions the threats of the imperial cult by local authorities (2:13), John's primary concern in Rev 2-3 is the false teachers and their teachings in the five churches except for the churches in Sardis and Laodicea. Thus, he praises or rebukes them through Jesus's mouth, depending on how they deal with the opponents and their lessons. He also shows deep-rooted resentment against them by stigmatizing them with the word "Satan" and the names of the most notorious figures in the Jewish Scripture, Balaam and Jezebel.

To analyze the intergroup conflicts between John and his opponents, between ingroup and

outgroup in John's congregations in Rev 2-3. I applied social identity theory, one of the methods of social psychology. During his exile in Patmos, some churches were afflicted by Jewish accusations, and some were infused with Hellenistic accommodating teachings. Consequently, they were losing their positive religious identity and compromising with the pagan cultic culture.

After examining the text, we found that in the Roman cultic culture, the seven churches faced social identity crises for various reasons such as the loss of their first love, the acceptance of the false teachings, the threats of the Jews, their spiritual indolence, and complacency derived from wealth.

In such a circumstance, John needed to offer clear social boundaries between his ingroup and the outgroups to which the opponents belonged. On the other hand, to attack the outgroups powerfully, he categorizes them with the most negative term Satan and the biblical satanic characters Balaam and "Jezebel" ("negative outgroup prototypes"). This was the way to maximize the efficiency to rebuild John's ingroup's social identity and to prevent them from defecting away from the ingroup and participating in imperial cults (2:14, 2:20). Since John urges his community to recategorize themselves by choosing which group they would belong to, his letters help them to promote the process of "social categorization."

Then, John tried to present clearer ingroup prototypes and norms that stipulate the group's religious identity (who are we? or what do we believe?) and behavior (how do we act?) against the false teachings of the Nicolaitans and "Jezebel." In Rev 4-5, John clarifies what we believe and who God and the Lamb are (the doctrine of God and Christology) in contrast to the Jewish and Hellenistic ideas. In the rest of the apocalyptic part, he answers the questions about the ingroup identity (Who are we and how do we live as Jesus's followers?" (Ecclesiology)) by presenting "ingroup prototypes" and "outgroup prototypes."

Through this process of social identification, John expects his ingroup to internalize and assimilate the desired ingroup prototypes and norms and to compare the ingroup prototypes to the outgroup prototypes so that they may gain positive ingroup distinctiveness between John's ingroup and other groups (social comparison).

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